Commentary
January 2004

Iraq's Future—and Ours

Victor Davis Hanson

Beyond the Geneva Accord
Hillel Halkin

The Demons of Europe
Josef Joffe

Next of Kin—A Story
Jennifer Moses

Lies the Germans Tell Themselves
Bartosz Jalowiecki

Patrick O'Brian's Excellent Adventure
Michael J. Lewis

Opera, Grand and Grandiose
Terry Teachout

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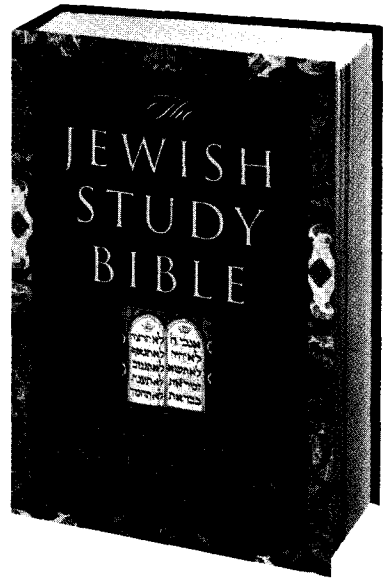

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Commentary
January 2004

Letters from Readers

Judging the Justices

To the Editor:

Many of the contributors to your symposium ["Has the Supreme Court Gone Too Far?," October 2003] bewail the imperial federal judiciary, so I was astonished that not one of them discussed what a meaningful political response might include. If the problem is as serious as they say, it is time to move beyond eloquent hand-wringing and to consider a number of actions that Congress might take.

In the first place, Congress presumably has oversight authority in relation to its financing of the federal court system. If executive-branch bureaucrats can be called to account before committees with jurisdiction over their budgets, it is hard to see why the judiciary committees of the House and Senate cannot question judges on the rigor and professionalism with which they carry out their far more important function of reviewing the constitutionality of legislation. Calling public attention to official over-reaching is a fundamental instrument of democratic governance. Why should Congress give the judiciary a pass?

Congress might also revive legislation, considered but not adopted in the 19th century, that would require an extraordinary majority of six or seven Justices to declare a legislative act unconstitutional. The principle that a single judge should not be able to override decisions of popularly elected representatives—as in the many five-to-four decisions of recent years—is both sensible and democratic.

Finally, Congress might propose a constitutional amendment ending the lifetime tenure of federal judges. Though Sanford V. Levinson mentions this idea in passing in the symposium, he might have added that it would stand solidly in the tradition of employing the amendment process to bring our centuries-old constitutional order into line with evolving democratic norms (as in the direct election of Senators and limiting Presidents to two terms). Indeed, of the three branches of government, only the judiciary has not had its 18th-century design modified. Life tenure for federal judges has by now left them in a peculiar class whose other notable members are third-world autocrats and the Pope.

Michael W. Schwartz
New York City

To the Editor:

Your symposium on the Supreme Court is rich in analysis but thin on recommendations for reform. More than 40 years ago, Sidney Hook brilliantly addressed this issue. "Those who defend the theory of judicial supremacy," he wrote, "cannot easily square their position with a reasonable interpretation of the theory of democracy."

Hook believed that we should adopt a version of a proposal first suggested by Chief Justice John Marshall:

> The Justices of the Supreme Court should continue to function as they have done in the past, but with respect to congressional legislation, their opinion should have nullificatory force only when it is unanimous. The unanimity rule would apply only to the statutes of Congress and not to the states.

Indeed, Hook was prepared to go even farther:

> I should favor an amendment incorporating Marshall's suggestion which would give Congress the power to override a unanimous Court veto by a two-thirds vote of all elected members in both houses. Under such a provision, differences between Court and Congress would provide occasions for great national debate, somewhat

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in the way in which differences between the Congress and the executive do today.

Not one of the contributors to the symposium denies that the Supreme Court has grown enormously in power. Is it not time we had a national debate on Hook's proposal?

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

The election of judges has become common in many states. Why not try it for the federal judiciary as well? Of course, elected judges are often even more political than appointed ones. But electing them for definite terms would avoid the disruptive, ideological battles of Senate confirmation and would place judicial selection in the hands of the people.

W.H. RIDDELL
Tampa, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Cass R. Sunstein argues that Justice Antonin Scalia is a bad "originalist" because, in the recent affirmative-action cases, he failed to address the "careful historical studies" that have been done of the Fourteenth Amendment (referring, I suppose, to those of Charles Fairman, Alexander Bickel, and Raoul Berger). These studies suggest that the amendment's drafters and ratifiers were, in Mr. Sunstein's words, "entirely comfortable with race-conscious programs designed to help African-Americans."

But Justice Scalia is primarily a "textualist": that is, he tries to determine the meaning of the words used in a statute or in the Constitution rather than what the legislature or framers intended to accomplish. For a textualist, the historical materials referred to by Mr. Sunstein, which show the "comfort" with race-conscious programs felt by the framers of the equal-protection clause, are beside the point. What matters is that, to an ordinary reader of English today, the phrase "equal protection of the laws" in the Fourteenth Amendment is perfectly clear. If it was designed to countenance race-conscious programs, the framers chose a most opaque way of saying so. When the University of Michigan admits white students under one set of rules and black students under another (far more lenient) set, it is hard to maintain that the two groups receive equal protection under Michigan law.

Moreover, although most government classifications of individuals need only survive a test of "rationality," racial classifications are in a different category. The Court has never held that they are absolutely void, but it has for many years maintained that they are "suspect," subject to "strict scrutiny," and that they satisfy the demand for equal protection only if they are a necessary ("narrowly tailored") means of serving a "compelling governmental interest." Few if any observers believe that Justice O'Connor's examination of Michigan's admissions policies in *Grutter* comes within shouting distance of strict scrutiny.

Yet Mr. Sunstein remains untroubled by the decision. He believes that the admissions policy of the Michigan law school was properly upheld in *Grutter* (and that the undergraduate admissions policy in *Gratz* should have been upheld) because similar affirmative-action programs have been adopted by state and federal institutions and apparently represent the will of the people (as distinguished from the will of unelected educational and bureaucratic elites).

Mr. Sunstein would not argue, I hope, that pervasive governmental practice overrides a clear command of the Constitution. Rather, he seems to think that such a practice should cause the Court to stay its hand when the constitutional command is ambiguous. A textualist would say that there is nothing ambiguous about the command of the equal-protection clause with respect to racial classifications, especially as it has been consistently applied by the Court.

THOMAS F. RUTHERFORD
St. Augustine, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Though I agree with Cass R. Sunstein that the principle enunciated in the *Grutter* ruling is correct, the decision itself is wrong on the factual record. Constitutionally, race can be a factor in the student-selection process as long as it is used on a case-by-case basis and the process does not degenerate into a quota system. But Michigan's admissions data overwhelmingly established that the law school had a quota system in place. "Justified activism," to use Mr. Sunstein's terms, requires disapproval of *Grutter* on the facts, while "justified restraint" requires approval of the principle it enunciates.

ALAN C. KOHN
St. Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR:

Several contributors to your symposium express concern about the possibility that the Supreme Court will soon have occasion to impose gay marriage on the states. This supposedly follows, as a logical necessity, from the recent ruling in *Lawrence* on homosexual sodomy.

But a moment's reflection should make clear that *Lawrence* would be a stunningly inapposite precedent for such a decision. *Lawrence* is grounded in a right to privacy, but marriage, in the eyes of the law, is not a private act; the legal definitions of marriage generally describe the union as the result of a tri-partite contract (with the state being the third party). Getting married is thus necessarily public in nature, and *Lawrence* does nothing to alter this legal reality.

LAUREN WALTER BERNS, JR.
St. Petersburg, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

I must take issue with your contributors' repeated citations of *Bush* v. *Gore* as an example of judicial activism. In that case, the Supreme Court affirmed the authority of the Florida legislature to establish laws for the conduct of a presidential election in that state. Article II, Section I of the Constitution gives state legislatures the power to establish laws for selecting presidential electors. Florida statutes, enacted by the legislature under that authority, require that recounts must be completed no later than seven days following an election.

In the 2000 election, the canvassing boards in the two Florida counties involved in the controversy had conducted one recount after an-

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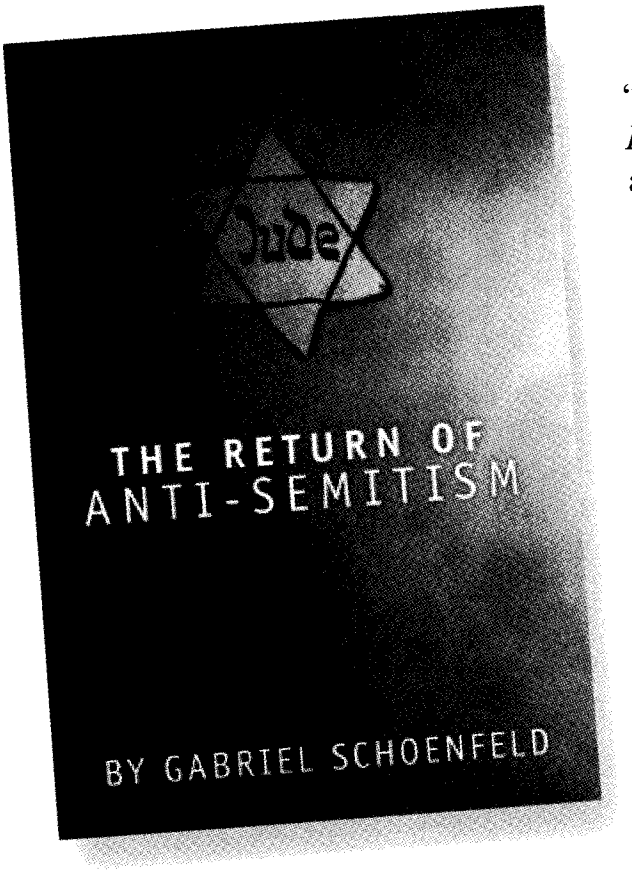

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—Elie Wiesel

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other, while continuing to change the counting criteria in an attempt to find additional votes for Gore. When the seven-day deadline had passed with Bush still leading, the Justices of the Florida Supreme Court obligingly extended the deadline for recounting. In so doing they altered a provision of the state's election law, and thus usurped the authority granted to the state legislature by the Constitution.

ARTHUR B. NEHMAN
Sarasota, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

I am not sure what William Kristol means by his claim that at the time of her nomination Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg "was every bit as ideological a figure as [Robert] Bork." Perhaps he is alluding to her leading role in gender-discrimination litigation during the 1970's and her service as general counsel of the ACLU while teaching at Columbia Law School.

But there is an important difference between the nominations of these two judges: Bork was enthusiastically supported by conservatives, whereas many feminists and liberals were at most lukewarm about Ginsburg, since they deemed her record as an appellate judge insufficiently ideological.

JONATHAN L. ENTIN
Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio

NOTE: *In Robert H. Bork's contribution to the symposium, an editing error conflated the due-process clause of the Fifth Amendment with the due-process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. We regret this error, which several readers kindly pointed out.*—ED.

Revisionism

TO THE EDITOR:

We thank Steven G. Marks for his generous remarks about our book *In Denial: Historians, Communism, and Espionage* [Books in Review, October 2003], but we must register emphatic disagreement with his criticism that, on the issue of American Communism, we unfairly tarred all historians with the sins of a few far-Left revisionists. We clearly stated that, though not all—or even most—historians hold revisionist views, those who do are not some isolated group at the margins of the profession. Indeed, their views dominate the leading American history journals. We pointed out that since 1972, the *Journal of American History* has not published a single essay that prominently featured a critical stance toward the American Communist movement or that favorably treated domestic anti-Communism.

Mr. Marks suggests that this has been due not to bias but to the profession's preoccupation with "faddish historical approaches," with the consequence that "very little on any traditional political subject" gets published. As we noted, however, in the last three decades the same journal published no fewer than 22 articles that portrayed American Communism and the Communist party in a positive light or that demonized domestic anti-Communism. The preoccupation with faddish approaches did not stand in the way of publishing these revisionist essays, only those that take a stance critical of American Communism.

JOHN EARL HAYNES
Kensington, Maryland
HARVEY KLEHR
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

STEVEN G. MARKS writes:

I share the outrage of John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr at the revisionists' scorn for the truth, and I greatly respect the work these two authors have done to set the record straight on Communism and anti-Communism. But one of the points of my review was that in this book, they weaken their own case by making claims about the historical profession based on limited evidence and innuendo. Even if some of the journals and some of the leaders of the professional societies are pro-revisionist, as they point out here, this does not mean that revisionist interpretations are the "prevailing views of the historical profession" (as they write in their book), or that alternative versions of history are kept from seeing the light.

My own impression is that understanding of the real nature of the American Communist party and even more so of Soviet Communism has progressed significantly in the direction of Messrs. Haynes and Klehr—in part because of the compelling evidence they have presented in their other publications. (One might legitimately say "scratch a postmodernist and you will find a Marxist," but that is a different issue.) In my opinion, *In Denial* would have been more effective if they had stuck to an exposé of the appallingly bad scholarship of the revisionists and left it at that.

Affirmative Action

TO THE EDITOR:

Carl Cohen writes with his usual clarity, cogency, and wit in "Winks, Nods, Disguises—and Racial Preference" [September 2003], but he pays insufficient attention to two key features of the Supreme Court's landmark affirmative-action ruling in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*.

In *Grutter*, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor built her decision on the judgment that higher education is just *better* "when the students have the greatest possible variety of backgrounds." Diversity makes classroom discussions "livelier, more spirited, and simply more enlightening and interesting," she wrote. It also "promotes cross-racial understanding, helps to break down racial stereotypes, and enables students to better understand persons of different races."

As a professor for over 30 years, I understand this well. Most students take their own ideas as so obviously right that instructors regularly have to play "devil's advocate" in order to push their thinking past the formulaic thrashing of straw men. A diverse student body works against overconfident narrow-mindedness far more effectively than anyone's imaginings of what so-and-so would say if he or she were present. These kinds of challenging discussions are no loony-Left perversion; they are central to the mission of higher education.

A better critique of *Grutter* is to argue that, in practice, nothing so beneficial will flow from racial preferences. This is so for several reasons: there are not nearly enough qualified African American, Latino, and Native American students to go around; many minority students self-segregate; and relatively few classes encourage the kind of student-

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Sue Ann Prince, Editor

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ISAIAH BERLIN'S COUNTER-ENLIGHTENMENT
Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, Editors

Isaiah Berlin invented neither the term "Counter-Enlightenment" nor the concept. However, more than any other figure since the eighteenth century, Berlin appropriated the term and made it the heart of his own political thought. Many of the essays in this volume were prepared for the International Seminar in Memory of Sir Isaiah Berlin, held at the School of History in Tel Aviv University during the academic year 1999-2000.
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to-student discussions identified by Justice O'Connor as being so beneficial. A *Grutter*-inspired admissions policy might yield its anticipated benefits in a highly selective law school or undergraduate humanities department, but it will not matter much in the engineering or computer-science departments, thus reducing the state's "compelling interest" in classroom diversity.

Moreover, although Mr. Cohen has little good to say about Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's arguments in these cases, she makes a powerful case for affirmative action by focusing on the bitter truth of historical and present-day racism. The treatment of minority Americans has been horrific, and the effects of exclusion and bigotry remain strong to this day. As Cornel West recently put it:

> [E]very major institution in American society—churches, universities, courts, academies of science, governments, economies, newspapers, magazines, television, film, and others—attempted to exclude black people from the human family in the name of white supremacist ideology. This unrelenting assault on black humanity produced the fundamental condition of black culture—that of *black invisibility and namelessness.*

Since our nation is not "free from the vestiges of rank discrimination long reinforced by law," Ginsburg argued, schools may use the generally suspect category of race to surmount both the legacy and the current reality of racism.

If we still owe a break to non-white applicants, they should get it on ethical grounds—and we will find the right place in the Constitution to write it in.

JEFF ZORN
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California

CARL COHEN writes:

The fruits of diversity, and other matters raised in Jeff Zorn's gracious and thoughtful letter, deserve the most careful attention. Two features of the recent ruling in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* are his concern: the opinion of Justice O'Connor regarding diversity, and the opinion of Justice Ginsburg regarding racism. I address them in turn.

(1) Higher education is "just better" when student bodies are diverse, we are told; diversity (O'Connor contends, and Mr. Zorn agrees) makes classroom discussions "livelier, more spirited, and simply more enlightening and interesting."

There is some merit in this claim; classroom discussion is enriched by diversity of judgment and conviction. But skin color has little to do with that. Universities do well to attract a variety of perspectives among students and faculty: Marxists and libertarians, Christian fundamentalists and atheists, even (heaven forfend!) Republicans. But in fact this kind of consequential diversity is *not* vigorously sought. More than half the citizens of Michigan who express a party preference are Republicans, but on our faculty at the University of Michigan (and at nearly all selective institutions) they are rare indeed.

The diversity that race preference advances, on the other hand, has virtually no intellectual merit. The children of upper-middle-class black and Hispanic families who are the chief beneficiaries of race preference add very little diversity to the cauldron of opinions in our classrooms. So, in the first place, whatever merit *diversity* may actually have, it cannot serve to justify preference by *race*.

But suppose that variety of skin color, plainly irrelevant in most contexts, really did improve classroom discussions in some contexts. Courses in criminal law are the tired example commonly put forward. Would that justify deliberate race preference?

Racial discrimination, of which my university's practice is one indubitable example, is morally wrong; we all know that very well. It is, as the Supreme Court has said on many occasions, an "odious" practice, not to be tolerated in a good society unless required by the most extraordinary circumstances. Does the modest improvement of classroom discussions in atypical contexts (supposing it is real) justify a public university's employing deliberately discriminatory devices on a large scale? Surely it does not.

Suppose it were learned that racial discrimination made a very substantial contribution to the quality of education. Would *that* be enough? That was the genuine belief of the Southern states in 1954, resisting the integration of the public schools. They were able to bring, in support of the doctrine of "separate but equal," a very great deal of evidence that segregation was good for majority and minority alike, much more solid evidence than the University of Michigan has registered in favor of its own form of racial discrimination. If those racists had been right, would we have been justified in retaining segregation for the sake of quality education? Of course not. The evidence that racial discrimination has very advantageous results was given, by the Supreme Court Justices in their unanimous decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, all the attention it deserved: they ignored it.

That Justice O'Connor should have found the fact (if it is a fact) that racial diversity makes classroom discussion more "interesting" a reason to approve deliberate racial discrimination is a painful mark of her gullibility. The issue before the Supreme Court in *Grutter* was whether there was a "compelling need" of the state of Michigan that would justify a practice putatively wrong and plainly odious. Is that alleged, modest improvement in classroom discussion a truly compelling need? If the need for color diversity in classes were really so utterly critical, could the university not simply lower its entrance standards to achieve that racial mix? That might not be wise, but would it not be more defensible, morally and legally, than outright racial discrimination?

I share the pride of Michiganders in the elite and intellectually powerful law school at the University of Michigan. But maintaining such a law school is not a *compelling* need of our state; many states do not maintain a law school at all, and they thrive quite nicely. The argument of the majority in

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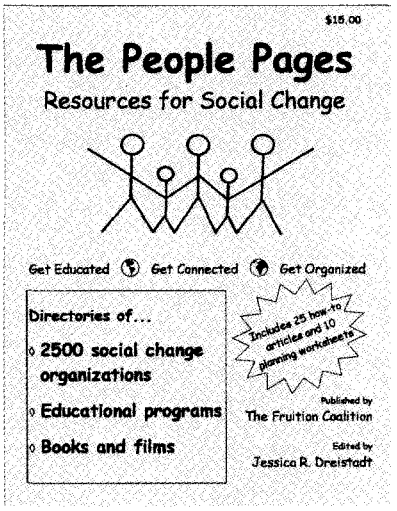

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Grutter, that the benefits flowing from diversity is a compelling state need, is simply outrageous. If improving classroom discussion in the law school is a "compelling need" of the state of Michigan under the standard of strict scrutiny, then (as Justice Scalia put it bluntly) everything is.

Everything I have said so far supposes that the claims made for the advantages of diversity are true. In fact, most of them are not true at all. Consider the claim, reported by Mr. Zorn, that racial diversity "helps to break down racial stereotypes." In fact it does the very reverse of that, *reinforcing* racial stereotypes by fortifying the belief that only through charity can blacks and other minorities be admitted to our finest schools. When students of some minority are admitted preferentially, their scholarly promise and attainments diluted by consideration of skin color or national origin, such students will, inevitably, perform less well than those whose credentials had not been so diluted.

That statistical inferiority in the performance of the preferred group results not from skin color but from corrupt admissions, and serves to *buttress* the canard that members of that minority are intellectually inferior. In athletics we do the same; a varsity athlete with a B+ average is an "Academic All-American" because athletic admissions have been so thoroughly prostituted. By giving systematic preference to athletes we have made the "dumb jock" not a myth, but a reality. For historical reasons, however, race preference is far more damaging to blacks than athletic preference is to athletes.

Does diversity, as O'Connor and company contend, "promote cross-racial understanding"? It does not. Here we have very solid evidence. Distinguished social scientists—Stanley Rothman, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Neil Nevitte—were shocked by Michigan's manipulative defense of diversity in reporting students' answers to loaded questions like: "Do you feel that diversity enhances or detracts from how you and others think about problems and solutions in classes?" So Rothman *et al.* did a serious study: at 140 institutions, they got reports from thousands of students and faculty about the current state of cross-racial understanding on their campuses, and then correlated those reports with an independent empirical measure of enrollment diversity on those same campuses. The outcome is precisely the opposite of what Michigan contends and O'Connor swallows: in fact, the study found that "as the proportion of black students enrolled at the institution rose, student satisfaction with their university experience dropped, as did assessment of the quality of their education, and the work effort of their peers" ("Does Enrollment Diversity Improve University Education," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2003).

The claims of great educational benefit flowing from racial diversity are, in sum, a tissue of exaggeration and supposition and falsification; those claims, regurgitated by the Supreme Court majority without any serious scrutiny at all, have no solid empirical support. And even if they did, such advantages could not possibly justify deliberate discrimination by race.

(2) Justice Ginsburg, as Mr. Zorn observes, took another tack, emphasizing the "bitter truth" of racism in our country, past and present. It is indeed bitter truth. Discrimination by race has been a moral catastrophe in America for 300 years and more. Does that justify its renewed and continued use?

Race preference in university admissions does not begin to remedy racism, past or present; the compensatory argument in defense of preference offered by Justice Ginsburg ("we still owe a break to non-white applicants," as Mr. Zorn puts it) has been weighed repeatedly by the courts, and repeatedly rejected. Race preference mistakenly treats entitlements as inhering in color groups rather than in the persons of those injured. Such preference inevitably rewards many who were not injured, fails to reward most of those who were indeed injured, and imposes its costs as a racial penalty upon still others who had no part in the imposition of the original injury. As a remedial device, race preference is unacceptably crude and intolerably unfair.

So plain is this that the University of Michigan, anxious to defend its preferences effectively, explicitly renounced all such arguments, relying entirely on the diversity defense—of which I have already said enough.

To Mr. Zorn I extend thanks for this opportunity to reflect upon the defense of racial discrimination grounded in the alleged benefits of diversity. However well meant, that defense is nothing short of an intellectual scandal.

Pernicious Pictures

TO THE EDITOR:

I greatly enjoyed Michael J. Lewis's "Cartooning, Left and Right" [September 2003]. It should be pointed out, however, that not all of Thomas Nast's cartoons were, as Mr. Lewis observes, "progressive" or "anti-establishment." He also penned a series of rather vicious anti-Catholic and/or anti-immigrant cartoons that pandered to the prejudices of the late-19th-century establishment. The most famous of these in Catholic memory depicts waves of bishops crawling up on America's shores with their miters looking like crocodile jaws.

This image reappeared recently in some of the cartoons published during the pedophilia scandal, though by far the most popular theme among cartoonists was "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil," with monkey-like bishops holding their hands over their ears, eyes, and mouths. It struck me that the latter sort of cartoon made a fair editorial comment on the scandal, while the former "crossed the line," evoking the anti-Catholicism of the various Know-Nothing parties of the 19th and early 20th centuries—parties whose political ascendancy in many regions of the country did not wane until World War II and whose interests were served so well by the cartoons of Thomas Nast.

EUGENE J. FISHER
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

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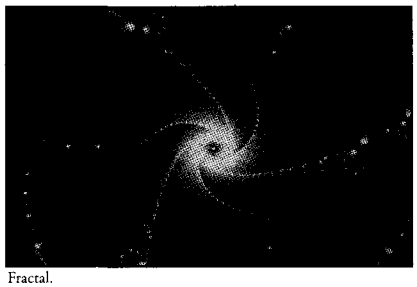

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TO THE EDITOR:

About Paul Conrad, longtime political cartoonist for the *Los Angeles Times*, Michael J. Lewis tells us only that he "won a coveted slot on Nixon's enemies list. In one brilliant offering, a play on Hamlet contemplating the skull of Yorick, Conrad depicted Nixon as the melancholy Dane."

But Conrad had other "brilliant offerings." From the mid-1980's until his retirement, he displayed an animus toward Israel that can only be described as shockingly anti-Semitic. In June 1986, for instance, when Jonathan Pollard confessed to spying for Israel, Conrad drew a cartoon showing the American flag's stars replaced with Stars of David, captioned "The Spies Who Came into the Folds." Another offering from the late 1980's showed a tiny, hook-nosed, bearded Jew in hasidic clothing standing atop a huge, supine, bound Palestinian. Conrad was relentless in producing this Nazi-style material, and it ran in the *Los Angeles Times* for years.

BRUCE J. SCHNEIDER
Irvine, California

MICHAEL J. LEWIS writes:

I thank Eugene J. Fisher and Bruce J. Schneider for their informative letters. I am struck that both of them make essentially the same point, that self-proclaimed liberals and progressives are not immune to vulgar ethnic stereotyping. On the contrary, when they do indulge in it, they are shielded from the charge of bigotry by their claim to be fighting bigotry. This recalls Huey Long's response when asked if fascism could ever succeed in the United States: "Sure, as long as it calls itself anti-fascism."

Under the Ayatollah

TO THE EDITOR:

In claiming that Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* suffers from "blankness" and "understatement" [Books in Review, September 2003], Sam Munson misses the point. Nafisi's subdued description of her life in Iran is riveting precisely *because* of her tempered manner. Issues that should have been mundane were rendered outrageous by the brutality of the Khomeini regime. Her "understatement" was to me a silent scream. God help us if in our literature, as in our current excuse for cinema, we require special effects in order to consider a book a good read.

GLORIA G. LENTZ
Los Angeles, California

SAM MUNSON writes:

I certainly agree with Gloria Lentz that "issues that should have been mundane were rendered outrageous by the brutality of the Khomeini regime." That is, they were rendered outrageous by reality. Unfortunately, Nafisi's monotonous and impersonal prose does little, if anything, to convey the quality of this outrageousness to the reader. This hardly amounts to a plea on my part for "special effects." Understatement is all well and good, but it should not be mistaken for subtlety.

We mourn the death of

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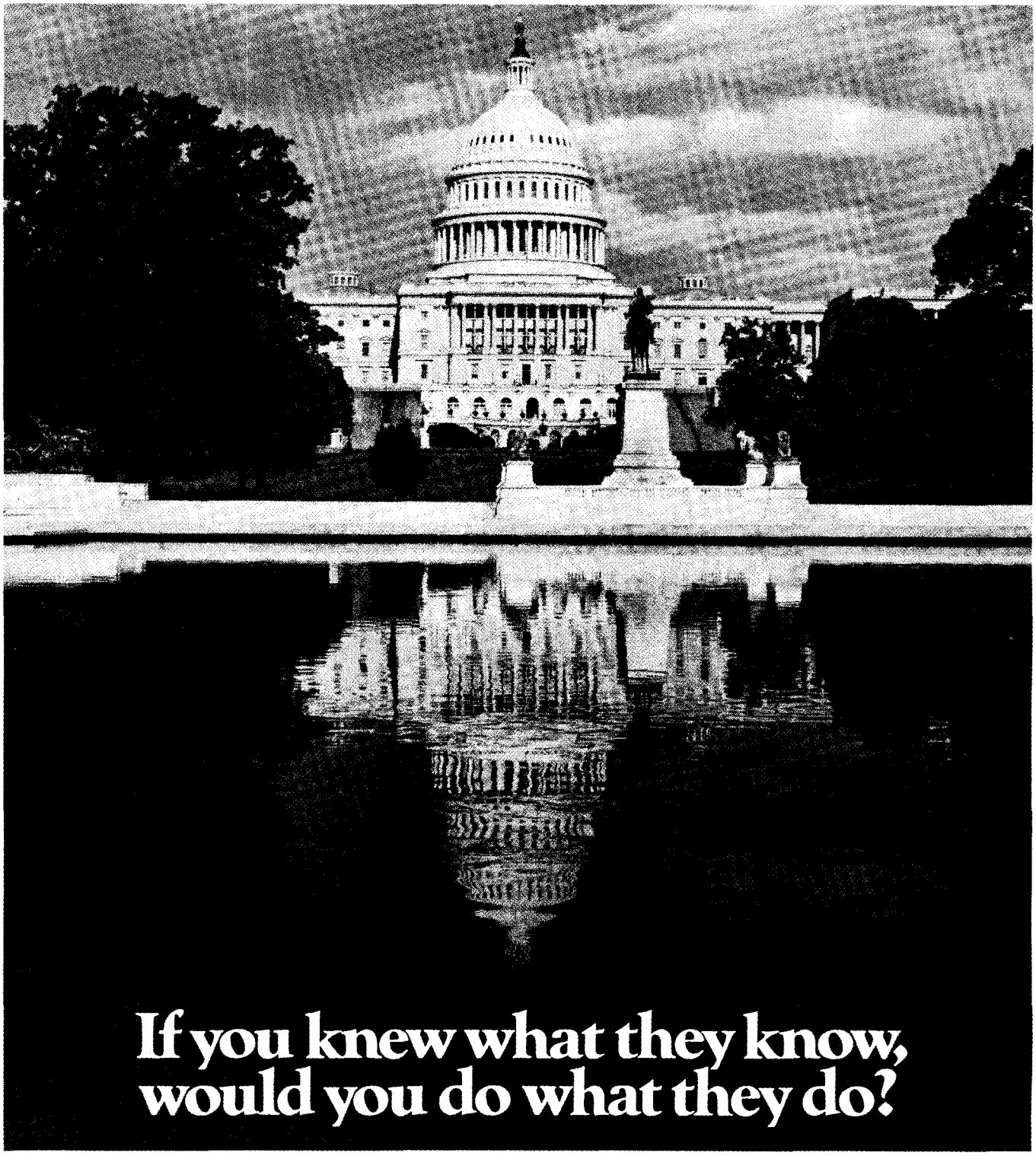

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Commentary
January 2004

Iraq's Future—and Ours

Victor Davis Hanson

On November 21, 2003, some minor rocket attacks on the Iraqi oil ministry and on two hotels in Baghdad elicited an exceptional amount of attention in the global media. What drew the interest of journalists were the terrorists' mobile launchers: they were crude donkey carts.

This peculiar juxtaposition of 8th- and 21st-century technology was taken as emblematic of the entire American experience in Iraq—an increasingly hopeless clash between our overwhelming conventional strength and stealthy terrorists able to turn our own lethal means against us with cheap and ubiquitous native materials. How could we possibly win this contest, when an illiterate thug with a rusty RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) launcher could take down a West Point graduate along with his million-dollar Black Hawk helicopter while those upon whom we have been lavishing our aid cheered our deaths and ransacked the corpses?

In an extensive, on-the-ground account of the post-bellum chaos, George Packer in a recent issue of the *New Yorker* lists an array of missteps that brought us to this sorry pass. We put too much trust in exiled Iraqis; we allowed looters and fundamentalists to seize the initiative right after the war; we underestimated both the damage done to the infrastructure by Saddam Hussein and the pernicious and still insidious effects of his murderous, Soviet-style government hierarchy. Mark Danner, in the *New York Review of Books*, relates much the same story, emphasizing our tolerance of looting and our disbanding of the Iraqi army as factors contributing in tandem to the creation of the Iraqi resistance, now thriving on a combination of plentiful cash (from looting and prewar caches) and a surplus of weaponry and manpower (from the defunct army).

Both authors make good points, including about American naiveté and unpreparedness. But lacking in these bleak analyses of failures and setbacks are crucial and complicating elements, with the result that the overall picture they draw is both distorted as to the present and seriously misleading with regard to the future.

II

It is a genuine cause of lament that many American lives have been lost in what should have been an uncontested peace since the war ended in April. But let us begin by putting the matter in perspective. The reconstruction of Iraq is proceeding well: electrical power, oil production, everyday commerce, and schooling are all in better shape than they were under Saddam Hussein. More

Victor Davis Hanson *teaches classics at California State University in Fresno and is a senior fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford. Among his recent books are* Mexifornia, Ripples of Battle, *and the forthcoming collection,* Between War and Peace *(Random House), which includes a number of articles originally published in* Commentary. *His "Lessons of the War" appeared in our June 2003 issue.*

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saliently, none of the biblical calamities confidently anticipated by critics of the March invasion has yet materialized. Those prophecies of Armageddon featured thousands of combatants killed, hundreds of oil wells set afire, mass starvation, millions festering in refugee camps, polluted waters in the Gulf, "moderate" Arab governments toppled, the "Arab street" in a rage, and a wave of 9/11-style terror loosed upon the United States.

We are an impatient people. In part, no doubt, our restlessness is a byproduct of our own unprecedented ease and affluence. Barbarians over the hills do not descend to kill us; no diseases wipe out our children by the millions; not starvation but obesity is more likely to do us in. Since we are so rich and so powerful, why is it, we naturally wonder, that we cannot simply and quickly call into being a secure, orderly, prosperous Iraq, a benign Islamic version of a New England township? What incompetence, or worse, lies behind our failure even to seize Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein?

But Iraq is not Middlebury or Amherst—and it will not be for another century. What is truly astonishing is not our inability in six months to create an Arab utopia, but the sheer audacity of our endeavor to send our liberating troops into the heart of an ancient and deeply chauvinistic culture that over the past decades had reduced itself to utter ruin. Saddam Hussein and his sons spent those decades gassing their own people, conducting maniacal wars against Iran and Kuwait, launching missiles into Israel and Saudi Arabia, despoiling the Mesopotamian wetlands and driving out the marsh people, and systematically murdering hundreds of thousands of innocents. Real progress would have meant anything even marginally better than this non-ending nightmare, let alone what we have already achieved in Iraq.

Nor did Saddam Hussein and his sons kill without help. After traveling 7,000 miles to dispose of him, we were confronted by his legacy—a society containing tens of thousands of Baathists with blood on their hands, 100,000 felons recently released from Saddam's prisons, and millions more who for decades took solace in a species of national pride founded on butchery and plunder. After a mere seven months, are we to be blamed for having failed magically to rehabilitate such people? Should we instead have imprisoned them en masse, tried them, shot them, exiled them?

Going into the heart of Mesopotamia, American troops passed Iraqi palaces with historic and often ominous names: Cunaxa, whence Xenophon's 10,000 began their arduous journey home; Gaugamela, where Alexander devastated the Persian imperial army; and, not far away in southeastern Turkey, Carrhae, where the Roman triumvir Crassus lost his 45,000-man army and his own head. Mesopotamia has long been a very dangerous place for Westerners. By any historical measure other than our own, it is nothing short of preposterous that, in less than a year's time, American troops would plunge into such a cauldron, topple the world's worst dictator, and then undertake to introduce the rudiments of a liberal society in the center of the ancient Islamic caliphate—all at a cost of a little over 400 lives.

Now, however, after one of the most miraculous victories in military history, we demand an almost instantaneous peace followed by the emergence of a sort of Iraqi Continental Congress. We demand the head of Saddam Hussein, forgetting that Adolf Eichmann disappeared for years in the post-Nazi archipelago abroad, and that neither Ratko Mladic nor Radovan Karadzic has yet been scooped from the swamp of the Balkans. Our journalists describe the chaos besetting a society allegedly traumatized by American war that in reality is struggling with the legacy of its own destructive past. In Iraq we are not trying to rebuild the equivalent of a flattened Hamburg or a Tokyo among the equivalents of shell-shocked and thoroughly confused Germans or Japanese. We are attempting something much more challenging: to impose a consensual system upon *spared* peoples, who in liberation did far more to destroy their own country (the losses to pillaging ran to about $12 billion) than we did in either the war or the ensuing occupation.

III

Most of the Baathists among our current enemies in Iraq chose to flee rather than stand and fight. The homes of Saddam's henchmen were not all bombed. Their friends were not killed. Their pride was only temporarily lost—to be regained, evidently, upon their discovery that it is easier and safer to murder an American who is building a school and operating under strict rules of engagement than to take on Abrams tanks barreling into Baghdad under a sky of F-16's.

Such are a few of the ironies entailed in our stunning military success, even if overlooked in analyses of the recent turmoil. And there are still more. Hard as it may be to accept, a rocky peace may well be the *result* of a spectacularly rapid victory. Imagine our war instead as a year-and-a-half

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continuum of active combat, stretching from the late-March 2003 invasion until the scheduled assumption of power of the Iraqi provisional government this coming July. Now suppose that over the course of this time frame, about 5,000 of Saddam's hardcore killers had either to be killed, captured, or routed from the country if there were ever to be any chance for real peace to emerge. Somehow, under conditions of full-scale combat, one suspects the job would have been much easier.

Of course, we must not wish the war would have lasted that long in order to allow us freely to destroy Saddam's remnants, but we must at least appreciate that short wars by their very nature often require messy clean-ups. After the shooting stops, the aid workers arrive; the hard-core, hypercritical journalists remain; and soldiers must build rather than shoot.

Here, too, a little historical perspective helps. The U.S. and its allies do not have a good record of achieving quick and easy peace after quick and easy victory. Recall our twelve-year, 350,000-sortie, $20-billion experience maintaining no-fly zones in the aftermath of the four-day ground phase of the Gulf war; the thousands of Europeans and Americans who are still in the Balkans after the seven-week victory over Milosevic; the ongoing international effort to pacify Afghanistan after the United States and its indigenous allies routed the Taliban in a mere six weeks. It is simply much more difficult for static and immobile peacekeepers under global scrutiny to deal with resurgent, unconquered, and itinerant enemies. If things are rough now in Iraq, it is because they were not so rough during March and April.

There are other, cultural aspects to our dilemma as well. Many Americans have come to believe that war is the worst thing that can happen to humans. It would probably not have been easy in 1991 to convince them of the need to prolong our "highway of death" in southern Iraq, even if doing so would have prevented Baathist troops from escaping to Basra and killing innocents; or of the need to bomb Serbians in Sbrenica in order to prevent them from killing women and children; or of the need to annihilate fleeing Taliban fighters to prevent them from drifting back into Kabul months later to shoot young Frenchwomen trying to feed the poor and hungry.

What such Americans have forgotten is that there *can* be much worse things than war. Stalin, Hitler, and Mao killed far more off the battlefield than all those lost in World War I and II; bloodbaths in Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda transpired in "peacetime" precisely because there were no troops around to thwart the mass murderers. And then there is the lesson of General Patton's "unforgiving minute"—that brief window when the enemy collapses and flees and for that evanescent moment can be hit with impunity and made receptive to dictated terms. Whether out of exultation at our stunning success or from a misplaced sense of clemency, we chose to forfeit that rare opportunity.

What is more, in the immediate aftermath of the war we disbanded the Iraqi army, not out of oversight or folly but on the idealistic grounds that we wished to build a force untainted by Baathist officers and ideology. Not only did we thereby lose an opportunity to corral and systematically audit 400,000 soldiers in their barracks, but to the shame of wartime flight we added the greater ignominy of peacetime irrelevancy, soon to be exacerbated by shared unemployment and poverty.

If some of the constraints on our military conduct have been self-imposed, others are functions of (nonmilitary) reality. These days, our officers have adjusted to the fact that they operate in a topsy-turvy world, one where human-rights activists are capable of being largely silent about 80,000 Muslims killed in Chechnya but grow shrill when an occasional house of a killer in Tikrit is leveled or the family of a fugitive Baathist mass-murderer is interned. A William Tecumseh Sherman or a George Patton would have pointed out that the Sunni Triangle could be pacified only after the majority of its residents came to understand the hard way that they had much to lose and nothing to profit by indifference to or complicity with the Baathists. Their uncompromising and straightforward tactics are not thinkable today, when military officers are understandably more spooked by the prospect of media stories alleging American brutality than by the enemy.

IV

Not all of our problems are problems of perception, but at least a few are. What would have been the reaction of the *New Yorker* or the *New York Review of Books* had the coalition forces shot 500 looters to restore order and save the infrastructure of an entire people, or had we kept the Iraqi army intact to curb lawlessness, or had a no-nonsense provisional government of exiles ensured that the trains were to be running on time? Instead of hearing now about chaos and quagmire, we would be reading about poor families whose innocent teenage sons had been caught in crossfire, or

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about Baathists with dark pasts entrenched in the new military, or about the counterproductive American obsession with order rather than with pluralist democracy.

The reflexively critical gaze of the press operates all the way down to the tactical level, submitting every aspect of our military behavior to instantaneous and often hostile review. Partly in response to the biases of critics—but also in line with widespread utopian notions of leniency—we seek to mitigate the damage and death we inflict, thus inadvertently helping once again to render peace more deadly than war. Army interrogators who push or intimidate prisoners face court-martial or discharge, even though many of those prisoners have freely killed—and will again kill—hundreds of the weak and innocent. In the last days of combat, a few of our satellite-guided bombs were ingeniously laden with cement rather than explosives, in order admirably to curtail collateral damage.

But the more we seek to refine war by curbing the unpredictable and frightening nature of the violence that is the essence of that amoral enterprise, the more those inured to ferocity see our restraint not as magnanimity but as weakness or, worse still, a sort of decadence. (Our unwillingness to shoot looters was probably seen by most Iraqis not as a necessary indulgence but as fear of bloody confrontation—or as part of some farfetched conspiracy to induce Iraqis to run amok.) We have not lost confidence in our ability to conduct asymmetrical or unconventional warfare, but the task we have imposed on ourselves is no longer one of routing and eliminating terrorists and murderers; it is one of therapy. Confused by these mixed directives, our military is never quite sure whether it should be destroying or building; whether it should kill, be killed, or save; whether it should frown or smile. This can redound to the advantage of an armed and determined adversary with no such humanitarian obligations.

Post-bellum Iraq reminds us how much we are geared not to taking but rather to preserving lives—including, quite naturally, our own. Expensive communications, body armor, and redundancies in operational procedure are designed to protect soldiers from those who would blow themselves up to kill us. But the more money, time, and spiritual capital we quite properly invest in each of our soldiers, and the more precious each of them becomes to us, the more altered is the age-old and terrible calculus of the battlefield. One dead American causes far greater distress, not just among the American public but in the military itself, than the satisfaction prompted by the knowledge that dozens of Baathist murderers were killed in return.

No longer is our success in battle seen in a 10-to-1 kill ratio over the enemy, as at bloody Okinawa; or a 25-to-1 ratio, as during the 1968 Tet offensive; or the stunning 250-to-1 imbalance of the recent Afghan and Iraqi offensives, when perhaps as many as 10,000 Taliban and Iraqi soldiers in total were killed to our 450 or so combat deaths. Indeed, our military has rarely talked about the numbers of enemies killed or captured in Iraq, figuring, rightly or wrongly, that the public would either recoil from Vietnam-era nomenclature ("body counts") or yawn because its sole concern was that we not lose any of our own. As the size of our military continues to shrink, with fewer soldiers piloting fewer and ever more expensive planes and tanks, these trends will only continue.

Finally, as our government seeks—often successfully—to wage war with as little upheaval at home as possible, it never troubles to tap the inner reserves of the American people, who might well rise to the challenge of a long and difficult struggle against those who seek to kill us all. We are thus caught in yet another paradox: the more lethal and adroit an ever smaller number of American soldiers become, the more detached an ever greater number of Americans can be from the wars waged in their names. Our very prowess at arms has blinded us to what may yet be demanded of us by our current situation, namely, the need truly to mobilize ourselves as a nation in a deadly war.

V

WHAT THEN are the lessons of this peace? We have been making major progress in both Afghanistan and Iraq, but both of these campaigns are better appreciated in the context of the wider war that started on September 11—the worst attack on American shores in our history. That worldwide conflict is far from over.

Events in Iraq do not occur in isolation. In Afghanistan, Israel, Turkey, Bali, Pakistan, Morocco, and elsewhere, an identifiable enemy is killing Westerners or their supporters through shared methods of assassination and suicide bombings. These Islamic fascists eat, sleep, and use their ATM cards in real nation-states ruled and inhabited by real people, whose attitudes and activities either enhance or retard the killers in their midsts. A series of polls confirms that millions of these people, especially in the Middle East, were not all that unhappy about September 11, 2001. Dolls glorify

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Osama bin Laden; plastic Twin Towers with planes crashing into them are sold as toys in the West Bank. Roadside bombs take the lives of American civilians seeking to interview Palestinians as potential Fulbright fellows—and a gleeful populace stones the Americans' would-be rescuers. The Cairo papers print venom straight out of the mind of Joseph Goebbels. Our Saudi allies disseminate a more virulent hatred of America than do Iranians or Syrians.

All of this unmistakable enmity lends implicit support to the Baathist diehards who are now mining and shooting Americans in Iraq. And what message are we as a nation sending in return? That we give billions of dollars in aid to Jordanians, Egyptians, and Palestinians, that we have saved Muslims in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Somalia, Kosovo, and Bosnia, that we invite thousands of Muslims to emigrate to our shores to practice and proselytize their religion?

Yes, that is our message and our undeniable record. But the extremists and their passive supporters are already aware that the United States aids and saves millions of Muslims. They also grasp that we fear the bothersome mess of their terror and nihilism, and that historically our friendship has taken on the aspect of forbearance and then appeasement. While we publicly blame ourselves for our lack of sensitivity, they privately scoff that we are too sensitive. We talk of winning hearts and minds; they seethe not that Saddam was removed but that it was we who removed him.

If we are to be of service to the thousands of Americans whom we have asked to risk their lives in the alleys of Tikrit and on the peaks of Afghanistan, there is another, more deterrent message we might contemplate sending. It is that we ourselves are a bit unpredictable and now at last extremely angry, that without apology we can just as easily withdraw aid as extend it, expel visitors as welcome them, and become even worse enemies than we are good friends. Until we make clear to our adversaries the real consequences of their hatred, we will not be serving but subverting the accomplishments of our own soldiers.

What else might we do? To encourage triangulators like the Saudis and Yemenis to hunt down terrorists—as they have only recently begun to do, two years after September 11—we should remind them that America is not a neutral power, and not necessarily an ally. During the cold war, we accepted that so long as all of Eastern Europe lay under the thrall of Communism, the possibility of free trade, easy travel, or large-scale immigration was precluded. Similarly, so long as there is not yet a single democracy in the Arab Middle East, so long as many governments there pander to a virulent and hateful ideology of anti-Americanism, and so long as millions either ignore or abet the killers of Americans and Jews, why should our relations with these countries not lie under threat of severance by a new iron curtain?

In such a policy, *everything* would be on the table—all foreign aid, travel, commerce, immigration. Our ties with a great number of Middle Eastern regimes should be contingent precisely on their efforts to stop the implicit or explicit help they give to our enemies. With Syria and Iran, in particular, we are already in a death race to put an end to their murderous autocracies faster than they can prevent consensual government from emerging in Iraq. That country will never be truly free as long as there are thousands of terrorists in nearby Damascus and Tehran—something that President Assad and the mullahs seem to grasp far better than we.

Above and beyond this, we must acknowledge the nature of the wider war against terrorism, and of the dark times we are in. We of the postmodern age will lose many more of our own in this struggle, and must kill far more of our premodern enemies to achieve victory. The alternative to that depressing prospect is not a brokered peace but abject defeat, punctuated by more September 11's.

Even apart from the toll in Israel and Iraq, *all* of the deadly terrorism since 9/11—against the synagogue in Tunisia, against French naval personnel in Pakistan, Americans in Karachi, tourists in Bali, Israelis in Kenya, Russians in both Moscow and Chechnya, and foreigners in Saudi Arabia, the suicide car bombings in Morocco, the Marriott bombing in Indonesia, the mass murder in Bombay, the killings in Turkey, and so forth—has been perpetrated by Islamic fanatics and directed at Westerners, Christians, Hindus, Jews. In this respect, our efforts are better seen in comparison to World War II than by analogy to Panama or Serbia. Over 400 dead is a shocking figure if we are fighting a Noriega-type adversary; in a war to rid the world of the contemporary avatars of Nazism and Japanese militarism, it is proof of our competence so far but also, alas, only a down payment.

As for the Iraqis, it needs to be made clear to them that the country is theirs, but so is the responsibility to keep it theirs, and free. If, in years to come, they wish to avoid the embargos, no-fly zones, and periodic bombings of the past, then they

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must step forward now to establish a government that will preclude the emergence of a new Saddam Hussein or of Iranian-style mullahs.

How best to help them do this? In a perfect world, it might not be desirable, for example, to arm Shiites and Kurds to pacify the Sunni Triangle, but then many things in war are not desirable. Such militias might at least remind recalcitrant Baathists that thousands of Iraqis are angrier at them for what they did to their country than happy about what they are now trying to do to us.

It is another paradox, but inescapably true, that the more overwhelming our conventional battlefield superiority, the greater the need in the postwar period for different strategies to deal with killers and terrorists who recede when we bomb and blast only to reappear when we stop. Much of the hard military work that must be done in Afghanistan and Iraq should now pass from conventional soldiers to counter-insurgency units and Special Forces—numbering, let us hope, in the thousands rather than the hundreds. These, by means of intelligence-gathering and the creation of friendly cadres, are far better-equipped to perform the unenviable task of hunting down Taliban and Baathists, and to accomplish that task to the satisfaction rather than the chagrin of the local population.

This is not to deny the vital importance of maintaining daytime compounds from which American soldiers wearing Ray-Ban glasses, camouflage, and big boots can issue forth to exhibit strength and provide a bulwark for Iraqi police and militia. It is rather to recognize that there is necessarily something static and wholly against the American character in attempting to fight a defensive police action against paramilitary terrorists from fixed positions. The victory of last April will be largely preserved at night, by ingenious types who alone know how to win the hearts of local Iraqis as they kill the killers in their midst.

Contrary to myth, Americans can take casualties—but only if they know they are exacting a far greater toll on the enemy, and that they are on the offensive and on the way to overwhelming victory. This utter defeat of the Baathists and their terrorist supporters inside and outside the country is the task at hand. For good or ill, the peace in Iraq has been temporarily sidetracked from the political challenge of building a consensual society that will create the conditions inimical to both the ideology of political and religious extremism and its methodology of terror. But defeating Baathist diehards is no mere detour, and our efforts in that realm transcend the need to demonstrate to extremists and fanatics that they are in a war that they can only lose.

In an era of the greatest affluence and security in the history of civilization, the real question before us remains whether the United States—indeed, whether any Western democracy—still possesses the moral clarity to identify evil as evil, and then the uncontested will to marshal every available resource to fight and eradicate it. In that sense, our willingness to use unremitting force to eliminate vast cadres of proven killers, in Iraq and elsewhere, is a referendum on modern democracy itself.

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Beyond the Geneva Accord

Hillel Halkin

WHAT ARE we to think of the "Geneva Accord," also known as the "Geneva Initiative," whose gala kick-off was held in Switzerland on December 1?

At first labeled a public-relations stunt by its detractors, this latest proposal for an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement is not going to fade away. Its sponsors, starting with the 29 Israeli and 22 Palestinian intellectuals, academics, and politicians who formulated it jointly under the auspices of the Swiss foreign ministry, have stressed that it is a non-governmental document "representing no official body." But from the start they clearly intended to involve every official body they could in pressuring Israel to accept it. To judge by the international funding and media attention they have received, and the sympathetic response they have elicited not only in Europe but even from United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, there are good reasons for taking them seriously.

One reason is that the Israeli team that worked on the accord was headed by Yossi Beilin. Beilin, who served as Israel's minister of justice under Ehud Barak, and prior to that as Shimon Peres's deputy foreign minister from 1992 to 1996, has an extensive network of international contacts and is one of the most skillful behind-the-scenes operators in Israeli politics. A principal architect of the Oslo agreement, itself an unofficial working paper until close to the moment of its unveiling, he succeeded in selling it to the initially skeptical Peres, with whom he then convinced an even more dubious Yitzhak Rabin of its merits. Those who were surprised by Oslo's sudden appearance and fateful consequences should not underestimate Geneva.

This is especially so because the Geneva Initiative, worked out during the years following the collapse of the Clinton-Arafat-Barak summit at Camp David in 2000, is not as unofficial as it purports to be. While rejected scornfully by the present government of Israel, it enjoys the tacit approval of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Yasir Arafat. Beilin's fellow organizer on the Palestinian side, former PA minister of information Yasir Abd-Rabbo, is close to Arafat, by whom the accord was known to have been vetted thoroughly. Even if, for tactical reasons, the Palestinian Authority has refrained from explicitly endorsing it, practically speaking its many pages constitute an agreement between a non-governmental Israeli delegation and a governmental Palestinian one lightly disguised.

This is what makes the Geneva Accord both reprehensible and impossible to ignore. It is reprehensible because, contrary to the insistence of its Israeli signatories that they were dealing not with the PA but with private citizens like themselves, it was

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the PA to which they, without the political authority to do so, were talking. It cannot be ignored because, if it accurately expresses the Palestinian Authority's terms for a peace settlement, these must be addressed however objectionable the process of their disclosure has been.

Indeed, the initiative has the virtue of clarifying what until now had been filtered to the public through contradictory reports. Despite the many articles and polemics written about what happened at Camp David, it was never clear what the Palestinians' bottom line then was, let alone how this may have changed or been modified in the years since. Now, for the first time, we have a document in which the bottom line is spelled out. Of course, it is likely that in actual talks with the Israeli government, additional demands or concessions would be made. Yet judging from the level of detail to which the Geneva Initiative descends, the PA would appear to have thought out its conditions for peace carefully. What one sees of them in the accord is in all likelihood what one will get.

Do the Palestinians want peace? If they do, is this a peace that Israel should want, too? And if not, can Israel explain its rejection of it to the world without further exacerbating its situation? Such questions can be answered with greater clarity by looking at what the Geneva Accord says.

"BASED ON the Clinton Plan of late 2000," as a preface to its Hebrew text observes, the initiative began as a sequel to the Taba talks in the winter of 2000-2001, six months after the collapse of Camp David. From what is known about those talks, they managed partially but not wholly to bridge gaps that had proved insurmountable at Camp David before they themselves broke down, to be followed shortly thereafter by the downfall of the Barak government at the polls.

In the aftermath of Taba, two schools of thought emerged among its Israeli participants. One, represented by Barak and his foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, held that Israel had made every possible concession and that the Palestinians, committed to violence as a way of ejecting Israel from the occupied territories, never wanted the talks to succeed. The other, which included former army chief-of-staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Barak's bureau chief Gilad Sher, maintained that the Palestinians did want an agreement and that a prolongation of the talks could have resulted in one. Subsequently, Lipkin-Shahak agreed to take part in the Beilin/Abd-Rabbo initiative, whose aim was precisely to show that a positive outcome could be obtained by continuing to "negotiate" from the point where Taba ended. Joining him were other ex-army officers, including Amram Mitzna, the unsuccessful Labor-party candidate for prime minister in the elections of 2003; left-wing Knesset members like Avraham Burg and Yuli Tamir; academics like Ron Pundak, another architect of Oslo; the writers Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and David Grossman; and additional public figures.

At Taba as earlier at Camp David, four main issues had remained unresolved: the future borders of Israel and Palestine; the status of Jerusalem and its holy sites; Israeli military security and Palestinian demilitarization; and the problem of Palestinian refugees. (The question of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories was not an explicit bone of contention, Barak having accepted in advance the demand that no Jewish settlers remain in Palestinian territory.) What solutions for these four issues does the Geneva Initiative propose?

• ON BORDERS, the accord has adopted the Palestinian position of the year 2000: namely, that Israel withdraw to its pre-June 1967 armistice lines with Jordan and Egypt, any modifications of which must be minor and mutually symmetrical. Thus, in a map accompanying the text of the accord, Israel is awarded 163 square kilometers beyond the 1967 "green line" in return for an equal area transferred to Palestine from pre-1967 Israel. The land to be relinquished by Israel includes an eastward widening of Gaza and two bulges in the western foothills of Judea. To be yielded by the Palestinians are a wiggly bit of the West Bank opposite Tel Aviv, several small enclaves in greater Jerusalem, and a larger pocket southwest of the capital. All of these areas have concentrations of Jewish settlers. Some of them, like the town of Alfei Menashe not far from Tel Aviv, or the large bedroom community of Ma'aleh Adumim between Jerusalem and Jericho, are to be linked to Israel by roads running through Palestinian territory.

An arrangement by which 2.5 percent of the West Bank is exchanged for the same amount of land in Israel marks a significant Israeli retreat from the Barak government's position of 2000, which reportedly called for the transfer to Israel of anywhere from 4 to 12 percent of the West Bank, with anywhere from a third to a ninth as much land being ceded in return. (In the course of the negotiations, Israel progressively reduced its demands—hence the range of figures.) Moreover, whereas Israel insisted at the time on the retention of all larger settlements except for Kiryat Arba outside

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Hebron, the Geneva Accord deprives Israel not only of Kiryat Arba but also of Ariel with its population of 25,000, Efrat with its 8,000, and other sizable towns. Overall, the Barak map had left roughly 80 percent of the settlers, currently said to number close to 230,000, inside Israel; the Geneva Initiative leaves fewer than 50 percent.[1]

The frontier between Israel and Palestine is conceived of by the Geneva Initiative as a strict line of separation, open only at a small number of crossings to Palestinians and Israelis bearing valid papers. An Arab from the Palestinian town of Baka el-Sharkiya or "East Baka" who wishes to visit a friend in the Israeli town of Baka el-Gharbiya or "West Baka," a three-minute walk away, will have to apply for a visa at the nearest Israeli consulate; a Jew desiring to pray at Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, or at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, will get there by special bus accompanied by a contingent of an international force. Allegedly "a model for the building of trust between the [two] peoples," the accord sketches, at least in its early stages, a relationship of minimal contact between them that more resembles Israel's currently cold relations with Arab neighbors like Egypt and Jordan than it does the close ties between once bitter enemies like France and Germany.

• In Jerusalem, too, the Geneva Accord's "negotiators" have agreed on a return to the pre-June 1967 lines between the Arab and Jewish parts of the city, with a number of exceptions. One is the large Jewish neighborhoods, like Gilo in the south and Ramot and Nevei Ya'akov in the north, built in Arab Jerusalem after 1967; these will remain in Israeli hands. Another is the Jewish quarter of the old walled city and its Western Wall, also given to Israel, while the Old City's Muslim, Christian, and Armenian quarters are to be in Palestine. Within the walls, there will be freedom of movement; outside of them, the same border regime will prevail as elsewhere, creating two intricately interlocking but disconnected municipalities with permits required to go back and forth. Common concerns like highway construction, water and sewage lines, and garbage collection are to be coordinated by joint committees. The Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives will be under Palestinian sovereignty but Jewish control, as will the Tower of David.

As for the vexed issue of the Temple Mount or Haram el-Sharif with its Muslim shrines of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, here, too, the initiative has ended up closer to the Palestinian position of 2000 than to the Israeli one, which called for shared control. The Mount, it is proposed, will be under full Palestinian sovereignty, supervised by an international review board; open to visitors of all religions, including Jews; and subject to a Palestinian commitment, made "in light of [the site's] unique religious and cultural significance for the Jewish people," to undertake no archeological excavations without the consent of both sides. The only effect of this commitment, it might be pointed out, will be to give the Palestinians a veto over all Israeli requests to excavate beneath the Mount in search of the biblical past.

• Palestine, according to section 5 of the Geneva Accord, will be a "nonmilitarized state" with a "strong security force," the exact nature of which is to be specified in a not-yet-published appendix. While it would be interesting to know why the appendix has been delayed—disagreement, perhaps, over the weapons needed by such a force?—more germane are the accord's provisions for ensuring that prohibited arms are not introduced clandestinely and that no Arab army crosses or threatens to cross the Jordan River into Palestine.

Such provisions are especially important because the main means of prevention and detection envisioned by past Israeli governments in the eventuality of a Palestinian state has been a permanent Israeli military presence on the Jordan River. This, however, is another point on which Barak yielded before the Camp David talks began. In line with that concession, section 5 of the Geneva Initiative permits Israel to retain soldiers on the river for no longer than five-and-a-half-years after a peace treaty is signed.

The initiative gives Israel three substitutes for having its troops on the river: military use of Palestinian air space, early-warning stations in the West Bank, and Israeli observers at international entry points to Palestine. The first of these alone is unlimited in time, if Israel insists on it. The early-warning stations are to remain only "by mutual consent" once fifteen years have passed, after which the Palestinians can dismantle them; and the observers can be asked to leave after five years. Nor can Israel act unilaterally if demilitarization is violated. It can only report its findings to an "Implementation and Verification Group," an international body charged with supervising the accord

[1] The claim of its sponsors that "300,000" or "75 percent" of all Jews "living beyond the green line" will remain in Israel is based on its lumping of the West Bank settlers with the 200,000 Israeli residents of East Jerusalem, the Jewish neighborhoods of which are to be awarded to Israel.

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and composed of representatives from the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations.

• THE PALESTINIAN refugees have been the most difficult and emotional issue in the history of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. At Camp David and Taba, the Israeli position was, first, that no refugees would be allowed to return to Israel, and, second, that no peace settlement was acceptable that did not clearly proclaim the end of the refugee problem, which could never again be allowed to constitute a demographic threat to the Jewish state. The Palestinians, on the other hand, while promising that the number of refugees actually returning to Israel would not exceed tolerable limits, insisted that the right to return be recognized for all of them. In practice, they assured the Israeli negotiators, few refugees would choose this option over financial compensation, absorption by host Arab countries, or resettlement elsewhere. Theoretically, however, the option had to be offered.

In ostensibly bridging these positions, the Geneva Initiative proposes, in section 7, a detailed plan of its own. The main features are:

a) "The parties recognize that UN General Assembly Resolution 194 [which declares that 'refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so . . . and that compensation be paid for the property of those choosing not to return'], UN Security Council Resolution 242 [which calls for 'a just settlement of the refugee problem'], and the Arab Peace Initiative [of March 2002, which reaffirms Resolution 194] represent the basis for resolving the refugee issue."

b) The refugees will be given the choice of returning to Israel, settling in the new state of Palestine, remaining where they are, or emigrating to Western countries willing to absorb them.

c) Israel will decide, at its "sovereign discretion," which refugees to admit and, in determining how many refugees to take, will "consider as a basis the average of the total numbers" of refugees in "various third-party states."

d) Israel and the Palestinians will determine the worth of the property left behind by the refugees of 1948-49, which will then be multiplied by a yet-to-be-decided factor to determine what has to be paid by Israel in installments to an international compensation fund.

e) The worth of evacuated Jewish settlements handed over to the Palestinians will be deducted from this payment, although only after "the value of the damage" caused by them is deducted from the deduction.

f) These measures will be considered "the permanent and complete resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem," following which "no claims may be raised except for those related to the implementation of this agreement."

SINCE THE Palestinian leadership knows well that opposition to the "right of return" runs straight across the political spectrum in Israel, Palestinian insistence on this "right," even if coupled with the assurance that it will be carried out only symbolically, has always seemed highly suspect to Israel. Why, Israelis ask, insist on a "right" that has been accorded to almost none of the tens of millions of the world's refugees since World War II, and that anyway there is no intention to exercise? Is this a tactic meant to torpedo a peace agreement in advance? Or is it rather to be a Trojan horse, smuggled in so that such an agreement can be nullified in the future by an irredentist Palestinian state on the pretext that the "right of return" has not been honored? Israel's greatest worry regarding a peace settlement has been just this possibility: that the Palestinian leadership plans to keep the refugee issue alive to enable it to reactivate the conflict when it wishes.

Fear not, the sponsors of the Geneva Initiative now say. At long last, this worry has been banished. In a dramatic departure from the past, the Palestinians have abandoned their insistence on "the right of return." The term itself, the Hebrew preface of the accord informs its readers, "does not even appear [in the accord]. . . . The accord states specifically that it is Israel alone that will decide on the number and identity of refugees entering its territory . . . and that neither side will make any additional claims after the signing of a treaty." True, the sponsors concede, Israel will commit itself to accepting a small number of refugees. Yet in exchange it will get a Palestinian pledge, which it did not get at Camp David and Taba, to close the book on the refugee issue forever.

Alas, the Israeli signatories of the accord do not seem to have read the text that they themselves joined in phrasing. If they had, or had bothered to look at General Assembly Resolution 194, they would have realized that the book will be closed on nothing.

How, after all, can they state without blushing that the "right of return" is not recognized by the Geneva Initiative when Resolution 194 states ex-

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plicitly that "*refugees wishing to return to their homes . . . should be permitted to do so*"? If the Palestinian side had truly agreed to waive this "right," what is Resolution 194 doing in section 7?

Nor does the accord say anywhere that Israel will accept only a small number of those refugees "wishing to return to their homes." What it does say is that Israel will "*consider as a basis*" the average number of refugees absorbed by other countries. Let us posit that this average is small—say, 50,000.[2] What is to prevent the Palestinians from maintaining one day that Israel, considering this "*as a basis*," should multiply that figure by five or ten? It can be cogently argued that, had section 7 meant simply to limit Israel to the average of the total number of refugees admitted to third-party countries, it would have said so in as many words. Since it does not, Israel is obviously expected to take in more than the average—how much more being left for future debate.

Nor is it the case that the Geneva Initiative guarantees an end to the refugee issue. "*No claims may be raised except for those related to the implementation of this agreement*" means just that—namely, that the Palestinians will be entitled to raise any claim they wish to raise alleging Israel's noncompliance with section 7.

In sum, a close reading of this section of the Geneva Accord leads to the conclusion that its Israeli "negotiators" have either fallen or knowingly climbed into a Palestinian trap—a trap set to go off when Israel is accused of reneging on the "right of return" it has agreed to. And this is quite apart from still other clauses that are flagrantly to Israel's disadvantage, like the one about the potentially ruinous compensation promised to the refugees—a payment that factors in the "value of the damage" caused by Israeli settlements while omitting to offset it by the incomparably greater damage caused to Israel by the Arab invasion of 1948, which triggered the refugee problem in the first place, let alone the enormous loss of Jewish property confiscated by Arab countries whose Jewish citizens fled to Israel in the same period.

SUCH GROSS amateurism raises a question: on whose behalf were the 29 members of the Israeli team "negotiating"? Unlike their 22 Palestinian counterparts, representing a government to which they had to justify themselves, the 29 were accountable to no one. Given their political outlook, their belief that Israel is as much to blame as the Palestinian Authority for the impasse between the two, and their eagerness to prove that an agreement with the PA is achievable, they must have desperately wanted to avoid another Camp David or Taba. Faced, therefore, with Palestinian positions that no thinking Israeli could accept, they chose to disguise them with verbal sleight-of-hand rather than reject them outright as any conscientious negotiator would have done. The 22 Palestinians, by contrast, needed to have no such qualms. For them, the initiative's failure could always be presented as evidence of their valiant defense of Palestinian interests.

The Geneva Initiative's sponsors have stressed that the accord is merely a proposal that can serve as a basis for peace talks. If Israel objects to anything in it—section 7, for example—it can move to amend the agreement. This is exquisitely beside the point, however. In the first place, the entire object of the initiative is to persuade Israelis and the world that both sides should accept a "fair" and "balanced" document that the Palestinian Authority has in fact already accepted; with all the pressure thus placed on Israel, why should the PA soften its position on the refugees or anything else? More importantly, even if the PA should agree to changes in section 7, its intentions stand revealed: in confirmation of Israel's fears, these intentions are to keep the refugee issue exacerbatingly open even after a peace treaty is signed.

Consider a hypothetical scenario. The year is 2012. Following a series of attacks across Israel's pre-June 1967 borders, carried out by refugees whose "right of return" has been denied and actively countered by Israeli retaliations, tensions in the region are running high. The government of Palestine, citing its 2006 peace treaty with Israel based on the Geneva Accord, has issued an ultimatum: either Israel agrees at once to admit additional Palestinian refugees or it will be regarded as having abrogated the treaty. Meanwhile, Islamic countries have begun massing troops in Jordan—a country that, ever since a coup in 2010, has been an ally of Syria, of a nuclear Iran, and of the pro-Iranian Shiite government of Iraq. With soldiers no longer in defensive positions on the Jordan River, the Israeli army has a grim choice: either it mobilizes fully and invades Palestine first, striking preemptively and being blamed for the outbreak of hostilities, or it makes do with a partial call-up and digs in along the 1967 border, a thin sliver of

[2] The average would depend, of course, on how many countries participated in the project and how many refugees each of them accepted. If a million refugees were resettled in twenty countries, some admitting as many as 100,000 and some as few as 1,000, the average would be 50,000.

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coastal plain behind it, while waiting for the threatening divisions to move. If it decides to invade or is forced to run a race to the river, or at least to the controlling mountain ridges of the West Bank, it will need to fight its way past a Palestinian "security force" equipped with the latest armor-piercing and anti-aircraft missiles, easily enough concealable to have been smuggled into the "demilitarized" state in large quantities under the nose of a politically neutralized "Implementation and Verification Group."

If such a prospect seems remote, it might be recalled that Israel confronted a similar situation in 1973. Then, too, Arab armies massed on its frontiers; then, too, it had to decide whether to act preemptively by calling up its entire reserves and ordering its air force to attack. Warned by the United States that this would be considered aggression, it let the Egyptians and Syrians strike first and suffered near-catastrophic battlefield defeats before recovering sufficiently to gain the upper hand at the price of horrendous casualties, many of them caused by missile-equipped Arab infantry. This recovery was made possible only by the fact that the fighting had started on the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights, far from the nerve and population centers of the country. Had it broken out along the pre-June 1967 borders, things would have been far worse.

Ever since the Six-Day war of June 1967, Israel's refusal to return to its highly vulnerable prewar armistice lines, which had never been recognized as permanent by a single Arab state, has been constant, a position held for sound military reasons by every single one of its governments. The Geneva Initiative's endorsement of these lines, without allowing even a compensatory military presence on the Jordan River, is enough by itself to render the accord unacceptable.

BUT THE initiative's territorial solution deserves to be rejected for another, nonmilitary, reason as well. This is its insidious assumption, inherited from Camp David and Taba, that while it is perfectly normal for over a million Palestinian Arabs to live within the state of Israel, where they will be joined by still more returning Palestinian refugees, it is forbidden for a single Israeli Jew to live within the state of Palestine, from which every last Jewish settler is to be evicted. The mind boggles at the thought of a Jewish state signing a peace treaty declaring large parts of the land of Israel *Judenrein*—the very parts, it so happens, most resonant with historic Jewish memories and emotions.

The issue, it should be clear, is not one of sovereignty. There is no reason why, under conditions of peace, Jewish towns and villages should not exist in a sovereign Palestine as Arab towns and villages exist in a sovereign Israel. On the contrary: if a sovereign Palestine cannot tolerate the presence of Jews, in what sense has it made peace with a Jewish state?

Furthermore, even if Jews are to be barred from Palestinian territory, the Geneva Initiative's approach to this exclusion makes no sense. If some of the larger settlements, like Ma'aleh Adumim and Alfei Menashe, can remain extraterritorial Israeli enclaves in Palestine, why not others, like Ariel and Efrat? In either case, all the Palestinians would be ceding is a narrow stretch of road and a residential island. Why here and not there?

Illogical, too, from Israel's point of view, is the nature of the proposed border. Official border crossings and visas will deter Israelis in cars from casually touring or visiting Palestine; they will do nothing to keep Palestinians on foot from illegally entering Israel as they do now to look for work or implement the "right of return" independently. The only remedy for this asymmetry would be for Israel to build a wall along the length of its border with Palestine like the anti-terror barrier it is building now.

Even then, given the Geneva Initiative's plans for Jerusalem, such a barrier would be of little value. A Jerusalem divided into a patchwork of Israeli and Palestinian neighborhoods abutting at numerous points is not one in which walls could be constructed. And once illegal Palestinians entered Israel through the city's streets, they could easily go anywhere on foot. The sufferers would again be people in cars, caught in frightful traffic while struggling to thread their way through the city without going from one country to the other.

But the initiative would be frightful for all of Israel. The fact that its 29 Israeli participants, all of them members of their country's social, financial, and cultural elite, did not realize this, or did not care about it if they did, is a devastating comment on what has happened to this elite's thinking under the impact of Palestinian terror.

THE GENEVA Initiative is a vindication of terror. If its sponsors have their way, those Palestinians who were convinced that the mass, indiscriminate murder of Israelis would greatly improve the terms offered them at Camp David and Taba will turn out to have been right.

A strong case can be made that, at Camp David

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and Taba, Israel already offered more than it should have—or rather, demanded less than it should have in exchange for the offer it made. It is probably too late to undo the damage wrought by this failure, just as it may be too late to undo the damage of the Geneva Initiative, since on every occasion in the past that Israel has proposed a concession to the Palestinians, it has been pocketed for future use even when no transaction has taken place. Nor does it matter that in this case the concessions are nongovernmental. They have been made by representatives of those elements in Israeli society that the Palestinians believe are setting the trend.

They are not necessarily wrong about this. The Geneva Initiative is only one of several indications, including the less elaborately conceived and publicized "Ayalon-Nusseibeh agreement"[3] that preceded and resembles it, that Israel's will is beginning to crack. Many Israelis, demoralized by the three-and-a-half years of the second *intifada*, which has left them with nearly a thousand dead, a depressed economy, and pariah status in much of the world, have come to resemble a medical patient who, weary of fighting his disease, thinks only of relieving his pain. The Geneva Initiative is being marketed to them as the ultimate pain-killer. Take me, it says, and you will feel better at once.

The initiative's sponsors, of course, have no illusions that "at once" is possible. They know their proposal stands no chance of adoption by the Sharon government. Their plan is rather to portray this government, both to Israel and the world, as the only obstacle standing in the way of the Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty that they have "negotiated." Increasingly attacked at home and abroad for its intransigence, and eventually abandoned even by America, this government, they calculate, will topple and be replaced in new elections by a "peace front" of the Left. That Yossi Beilin himself, having left the Labor party a year ago, is now busy founding a new "social-democratic" alternative to Labor that will carry the Geneva Initiative as its banner is, as they say, no coincidence.

There is nothing politically illegitimate about this. If the Israeli Left thinks that it has a workable plan for peace, it has the right and duty to seek a public mandate for it. Indeed, sooner or later it will be given this mandate unless the Center-Right coalition now governing the country can convince Israelis that it has a better plan. As it happens, however, such a plan is beginning to emerge. Ironically, it is based on an idea that originally came from the Left. This is to finish building the "security fence" now going up between Israel and the West Bank, withdraw unilaterally behind it, and turn it into a military and political border.

Many things can be said, and have been said (including by me), against this solution. A wall around the state of Israel is physically and symbolically ugly. It is mean-spirited. It steals Palestinian farm land and turns it into a sterile security zone. It amounts to taking a carving knife to one's own homeland. It is reminiscent of the age of the Iron Curtain. It is returning Jews to the ghetto from which Zionism sought to redeem them.

All of these things are true. The fence is a desperate measure. But so is the Geneva Accord. Israel today is a desperate country. It has failed to quell Palestinian violence by diplomacy, and it has failed to quell it by military force (although it has managed by heroic efforts to reduce it). Barring a fundamental change in Palestinian attitudes, the remaining alternatives are capitulation on the one hand and unilateral action on the other. Rigorously patrolled security fences have worked well for Israel in other places. Wherever they have been erected—around Gaza, along the border with Lebanon, the length of the Jordan River—they have been highly effective in keeping out armed infiltrators.

A UNILATERAL fence to which Israel withdraws from Palestinian territory would, like the Geneva Initiative, mean evacuating many settlements, including all those in Gaza and the Jordan Valley, together with Israel's troops on the Jordan River.[4] But it would keep many more settlements in Israel than does the Geneva Initiative, and without surrendering Israeli territory in return; most crucially, it would push the frontier further east, away from the exposed coastal plain and into the mountains of Samaria where the military topography is more advantageous. Israeli troops along such a border would not have to rush preventively for the Jordan River every time a threat materialized east of it.

Such a fenced border, of course, will not enjoy

[3] Launched last July by Sari Nusseibeh, a well-known Palestinian intellectual and academic, and Ami Ayalon, a former Israeli naval commander and director of the General Security Service, this peace proposal likewise calls for an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 frontiers, the abandonment of an Israeli military presence on the Jordan River, and the evacuation of all Jewish settlements from the state of Palestine. Unlike the Geneva Initiative, however, it rules out the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel.

[4] An idea reportedly under consideration by the Sharon government is to create a second, "eastern" fence that would retain the valley for Israel; but this, however tempting, would result in the Palestinian "Bantustan," surrounded on all sides, that Israel has been accused by its critics of wanting to create.

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international recognition. The international community has been hostile to its construction and will continue to be so. But the international community has been hostile to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank all along, and will reject any end to it that does not have Palestinian approval. As long as Israel behaves fairly toward Palestinians directly affected by the wall, compensating them for expropriated land and offering citizenship to those who end up on the Israeli side, the world will not be *more* hostile if 100 percent of Gazans and 95 percent of West Bankers wind up completely free of Israeli occupation. The Geneva Initiative, too, envisions a cold border between Palestine and Israel; a wall will not make that border significantly colder.

It has been argued that without all of the West Bank, and, especially, without Arab Jerusalem, the entirety of which would be kept for Israel by a unilaterally drawn border, no Palestinian state will be viable. This may well be the case, although it is doubtful whether a tiny state divided between the West Bank and Gaza would be viable even with Jerusalem as its capital. One way or another, any Palestinian state will inevitably become part of a larger entity; if it is not federated with Israel, then it will be absorbed into the Arab expanse around it, the West Bank becoming politically associated with Jordan again and Gaza once more linked to Egypt. This need not be a cruel fate, especially not for West Bankers whose close kin form a majority of the population of Jordan, a country three times larger than all of 1948 Mandate Palestine. Although they have had their uniquely unhappy destiny, the Palestinians are culturally, linguistically, and religiously no different from Jordanians, and could easily exercise their right to self-determination in conjunction with them.

It is precisely because a unilateral Israeli withdrawal to an impermeable border *is* a practical solution to Israel's problems that the Palestinian leadership is so scared of it—far more scared than of Israeli military threats or the expansion of the settlements. Chained to Israel in conflict, the Palestinians know that, though suffering and insecure, they can inflict insecurity and suffering in return. Separated from Israel by a wall, they will be deprived of the two weapons that have been the main items in their arsenal since 1967: terrorism, and one of the world's highest birthrates.

This is why Israel must proceed with the wall's construction as quickly as possible despite Palestinian and international protests. The specter of its completion is the one thing capable of bringing the Palestinian leadership to its senses. There may be better solutions, but these will demand fresh thinking on the part of both Israel and the Palestinians. By any measure, the Geneva Accord is not one of them.

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The Demons of Europe

Josef Joffe

At the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this year, a demonstrator wearing a mask of Donald Rumsfeld and an outsized yellow Star of David (inscribed with the word "Sheriff") was accompanied by a cudgel-wielding double of Ariel Sharon; the two of them were followed by a huge rendition of the golden calf. The message? The United States is in thrall to the Jews/Israelis; both are the acolytes of Mammon; and both represent the avant-garde of a pernicious global capitalism.

This is the face of the new anti-Semitism. Lacking certain murderous elements of the classical type, it is nevertheless rife with some of its most ancient motifs. What is new about it is the projection of these old fantasies onto two new targets: Israel and America. Indeed, the United States is an anti-Semitic fantasy come true: the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in living color. Do not Jews, their first loyalty to Israel, control the Congress, the Pentagon, the banks, the universities, and the media? Having captured the "hyperpower," do they not finally rule the world? That at least seems to be the consensus of the Europeans, who in a recent EU poll declared Israel and the United States, in that order, to be the greatest threats to world peace.

Yet the issue is more complicated than the reconditioning of an old myth. Almost every European critic of those two nations will vehemently reject the charge of anti-Semitism *or* anti-Americanism. Since the behavior of Israel and the United States always offers plenty to criticize, the issue is not easy to resolve. What is the difference between criticism and anti-Semitism or anti-Americanism? What, indeed, are the elements of *any* "anti-ism"?

At all times and in all places, there are usually five such elements. The first is stereotyping: indulging in general statements that attribute negative qualities to the target group as a whole. The second is denigration: the ascription of moral inferiority to a whole group, traceable in the last resort to an irreducibly evil nature. The third element is obsession, the idée fixe that the target group is both omnipresent and omni-causal—an invisible force that explains all misery, whether dying cattle or failing businesses. The fourth step is demonization. Here the key theme is conspiracy: thus, Jews want to sully our racial purity, or subvert our sacred traditions or, above all, to achieve domination. Finally comes the determination to seek an end to troubles by eliminating the alleged source of torment, be it by exclusion, extrusion, or annihilation.

This last element is where "anti-ism" assumes a quasi-religious quality. When it comes to the Jews, "eliminationism" is no longer operative in the West, though it is of course richly present in the Arab world. But to affirm this benign turn is not to dispose of the issue in the contemporary Western

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imagination. What do we make of a cartoon in the *New Zealand Herald* last June that depicted a devastated Palestinian cityscape with "AP✡RTHEID!" smeared across one wall? What of a sticker that recently showed up in Berlin, stating: "I love Jews, but I will not buy Israeli goods"? Does this new twist on "some-of-my-best-friends-are-Jews-but" betray a hidden and more sinister reality? This is a sensible question because, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the open expression of full-bore anti-Semitism runs up against a most powerful taboo. And in the wake of taboos, as Freud insisted, sublimation and the return of the repressed run close behind.

In polite Western society, it is *infra dig* to say: "Yes, I hate the Jews." Not so, "I hate Sharon" or "Israelis behave like Nazis." At this juncture, one begins to muse about displacement, about the human habit to clobber one object while actually targeting another, the other being usually protected by fearsome power, whether symbolic or real. Lashing out at an Israeli leader does not risk the raised eyebrows that demonizing his people, let alone Jews as such, would do in a post-racist age.

HOW, THEN, can one tell the difference between criticism and "anti-ism"? One test is language. Take this statement: "Demolishing the houses of the families of terrorists is morally wrong because it imputes guilt by association, and politically wrong because it pushes more people into the arms of Hamas." Such a statement is neither anti-Israel nor anti-Semitic; it might even be correct. By contrast, "the Israelis are latter-day Nazis who want to drive the Palestinians from their land in order to realize an imperialist biblical dream" inhabits a very different order of discourse, ascribing evil to an entire collective and, in its equation of Israelis and Nazis, revealing an obsessive need for moral denigration. In our era, the word "Nazi" itself stands for boundless evil. To apply the label to Jews or Israelis is to inflict maximal moral damage on them.

A second test is the test of selectivity. If it is always Israel that is the target of indignation or incrimination, but not Russia's war against Chechnya with about 60,000 dead, China's bloody repression of Tibetans and Muslims, tribal genocide in Central Africa, or the persecution of whites in Zimbabwe, then we are in the presence of a double standard. This strengthens the presupposition of anti-Israelism, if not of anti-Semitism.*

Indisputably, Israel has assumed a special place in contemporary demonology. At the more extreme end, Israelis have been characterized as oppressors and colonizers, as arrogant settlers and crazed religious fanatics, as Nazi-like killers of women and children. In this sense, Israel has become an obsession that cannot be explained away by recourse to anti-colonialism, a standard fixture of the post-1960's Western mind. Nor can the Western liberal habit of siding with the underdog explain why the Russian war against Chechnya has attracted only perfunctory condemnation and French interventions in Africa almost none while an Israeli retaliatory incursion into the West Bank city of Jenin in 2002 should have been branded instantly as a "massacre" of "thousands" before the facts were in (the facts being that 24 Israeli soldiers died along with 52 Palestinians, mostly combatants). As in all cases of anti-ism, it was the prejudice that selected the facts, not the facts that informed the judgment.

Nor can the opprobrium attaching to Israel be explained in terms of the Palestinians' noble cause of liberation and statehood. For neither the means nor the end is noble: suicide bombs seek to murder as many civilians as possible, while the noble cause itself is articulated in terms of politicide—i.e., the elimination of the state of Israel. Militarily, the Palestinians are the weaker party, but their ultimate objective remains a total one, whether expressed directly by Hamas and Hizballah and Islamic Jihad or indirectly by PLO officials when speaking to kindred audiences. That these cold facts are virtually ignored in European discourse is deeply suggestive of an old obsession.

The new obsession might be called "elimination-lite." If the anti-Semitism of yore sought to get rid of the Jews, either physically or by means of their complete assimilation, the "lite" version holds that if one could only weaken and push back Israel, only somehow force Israel to retract its occupation-*cum*-settlements, then, presto!, "the" Middle East conflict would be solved. Less reductionism—that is, less fixation on single causes—would reveal a larger set of problems and a wider tally of "root causes." These would include the many dysfunctional elements of Arab political reality that are unrelated to the Palestinian issue, including hegemonial strife among shifting contenders, barely suppressed civil war between believers and secularists (and between one sort of believer and others,

* On the question of whether Israel and the Jews are two sides of the same coin, I cannot improve on Hillel Halkin's compelling argument in "The Return of Anti-Semitism," COMMENTARY, February 2002. Suffice it to say that to profess intense dislike for Israel while sparing the Jews engenders such sharp verbal contradictions as inevitably to ring hollow.

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e.g., Sunni and Shiite), failed economies that offer no future to millions of young people, minimal interaction with other Arab economies, severely rationed political participation, a culture inhospitable to introspection, blatant inequalities between the sexes and among sects and classes.

Is all of this Israel's fault, too? Propinquity to the "Zionist entity" and the dynamics of regional enmity might be invoked to help explain the dynastic dictatorship of Syria; it cannot explain the mayhem in faraway Algeria. Adducing Israeli behavior in the occupied territories, brutal as it sometimes is, cannot explicate the sheer hatred directed against leaders like Ariel Sharon, the moral indignation directed against Israel but rarely against Palestinian terrorists, the reflexively one-sided apportionment of blame when there is so much blame to pass around.

But if Israel is not a "shitty little country" (in the words of a French ambassador at the Court of St. James), it is considered somehow *inherently* guilty—as Jews were seen to be inherently guilty through the ages. Hence, terror against Israeli civilians, even if briefly condemned, is placed in the context of Israeli conquest and oppression and so alleged to call for a "deeper" understanding. In fact, the higher the toll, the greater terrorism's validation in terms of the injustice and despair that are supposedly driving it. Thus, softly-softly, does murder spell out its own moral justification. Nietzsche would clap his hands in delight over this transvaluation of values, which ascribes moral worth to the most reprehensible of deeds: the massacre of innocents.

How has Israel come to be seen as the source of all misery? Why the denigration? The route to anti-ism is not a straight and narrow one. A cynical insight has been ascribed to the Israeli psychiatrist Zvi Rex: "The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz." Like the survivors of the Holocaust, the state of the Jews is a constant reminder of the moral failure not only of Germany, but of Europe as a whole.

The Germans did it, and Europe either connived or looked on—with some notable counter-examples like Denmark and those many individuals elsewhere who risked their lives for their Jewish compatriots. To consult Freud again, moral surrender to evil creates an irrepressible urge to shift blame from perpetrators and bystanders to victims and their heirs. The psychic mechanism goes like this: if the Jews could be shown to behave like Nazis, they would no longer have a special moral claim on us; if they are as bad as our forefathers, we can unshoulder our own inherited burden of guilt.

Add to this the culpability felt by the French over Vichy and colonial repression in Algeria, by the Belgians over their bloody reign in the Congo, by the Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese over their fascist pasts, by the Dutch over their (carefully concealed) collaboration with the Nazis, by the Swedes and the Swiss over their "pro-German neutrality," and there are plenty of incubated guilt feelings to spread around. Clearly, Israel delivers an excellent canvas for the projection of blame. When a former government minister, Nobert Blüm, calls Israel's anti-terror strategy a "*Vernichtungsfeldzug*" against the Palestinians, a war of annihilation, using a term normally applied to the Nazi war against the Jews and other "subhumans" in the East, the message of his subconscious rings out loud and clear. Thus, not so softly-softly, are words forged into weapons of self-rehabilitation.

Nor is Germany the only player in this game. Much of Western Europe has drawn its post-Holocaust identity from the rejection of the darkest part of the Continent's proud history. The battle cry of postwar Europe is "Never Again!," as Alain Finkielkraut has put it: a "no" to fuehrers, duces, and caudillos, to colonialism, conquest, and discrimination against the "Other." To regain moral stature, Europeans have turned anti-fascism into a doctrine of worldly transcendence, with a secular decalogue that reads, in part: thou shalt not pray to the discredited gods of nationalism; thou shalt not practice power politics; thou shalt relinquish sovereignty and rejoice in cooperation. From this moral stand it is but a short, tricky step to redemption's darker side. Do not the Israelis, of all people, behave in the evil ways we have transcended? Well, then, are we not better than those who so gratingly remind us of our unworthy past?

This is not anti-Semitism, but it is a derivative phenomenon. The inherited moral burden cries out for projection, and Israel, fighting for its just cause with sometimes unjust means but with far more restraint than Russia against the Chechnyans or Algeria against its Islamists, makes for a perfect target. Vilification spells moral relief because it redresses the moral balance—and so the verdict against Israel *has* to be "guilty."

But the story does not end here. Recall José Bové, the French foe of globalization who in 1999 led a "deconstructivist" mob against a McDonald's to protest what that company was doing to his country's culinary culture. In March 2002,

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this same Bové showed up in Ramallah, denouncing Israel and declaiming his support for Yasir Arafat, whose headquarters was surrounded by Israeli tanks. Never mind that the Israeli army had not just dropped in for a little oppression but rather to defend against mounting terrorist attacks. What the scene suggested was that Arafat's cause was Bové's cause. Here was a spokesman of the anti-globalization movement conflating globalization with Americanization (McDonald's) and extending his loathing of both to Israel.

The routine pairing of Israel and America is surely the most interesting new motif in our old story, and has been well dissected by Natan Sharansky in these pages.* How to interpret it? Again, one must beware of equating criticism with anti-ism and instead look for the classic telltale signs. They are there in abundance.

Stereotyping and denigration. The indictment of the United States comes in three parts. First, America is morally flawed. It executes its own people, and it likes to bomb other people. It is the land of intolerant fundamentalist religion. Selfish and self-absorbed, it refuses to ratify the International Criminal Court or agreements to protect the environment. It is "Dirty Harry" and "Globocop" rolled into one—an irresponsible and arrogant citizen of the world.

Second, America is socially retrograde: it is the fountainhead of a "predatory capitalism" (according to a former German chancellor) that denies social services to those who need them most. Instead of bettering the lot of its darker-skinned minorities, it shunts millions of them into prison. America accepts, nay, admires gross income inequalities and defies the claims of social justice.

Finally, America is culturally inferior. It gorges itself on fast food, wallows in tawdry mass entertainment, starves the arts, and prays only to one god, which is Mammon. It sacrifices the best of culture to pap and pop. In matters sexual, America is both prurient and prudish. It is a society where Europe's finest values—solidarity and community, taste and manners—are ground down by rampant individualism.

Demonization and obsession. The best shorthand statement under this heading is a cartoon on a Jordanian website in April 2002 that showed a jeep-like SUV, a pack of cigarettes with a Marlboro design, a can of Coca-Cola, and a hamburger—all dripping with blood. These, the cartoon insinuates, are the weapons that drive America's quest for global domination. They are meant to seduce, but the blood with which they are saturated symbolizes violent imposition. Yield to the seduction, and the price will be the loss of your own culture, dignity, and power.

Like any proper target of anti-ism, America is seen as omnipotent and omni-causal. America's is the hand that pulls all strings. The U.S. is the cause of poverty, despotism, and exploitation in the third world. Like any target of anti-ism, the U.S gets it coming and going: it is a threat to peace when it uses its fearsome power (Iraq) and a traitor to humanity when it does not (Rwanda as well as Bosnia/Kosovo before the bombing campaign).

THE SIMILARITIES with anti-Semitism are hard to escape. Like Jews, Americans are selfish and arrogant. Like Jews, they are in thrall to a fundamentalist religion that renders them self-righteous and dangerous. As classical anti-Semitism opposes the lovingkindness of the New Testament to the vengeful God of the Old, rapidly de-Christianizing Europe likes to contrast its secular-humanist ethos with the harsh Calvinism of America. If the Jews bestride the world as the "Chosen People," Americans claim to live in "God's Own Country" while arrogating unto themselves, as a favorite anti-Bushism has it, a "divine mission."

Another mainstay of the anti-Semitic faith, anti-capitalism, has likewise passed smoothly from the Jews to the United States. Like Jews, Americans are money-grubbers who know only the value of money, and the worth of nothing. Like Jews, Americans are motivated only by profit. Relentlessly competitive ("pushy"), they are the solvents of social justice as they are of every worthy tradition. If the empire of international Jewry was built on finance and trade, America's is built on a "globalization" that exploits the helpless and kills jobs.

Here conspiracy rears its head. Again like the Jews, America is the mastermind *extraordinaire*, its hand behind every plot, even the immolation of the World Trade Center; in 2003, a half-dozen books on this theme became bestsellers in France and Germany. Echoing a classic indictment of "World Jewry," a poster during an anti-Bush demonstration in Berlin in 2002 read: "Stop Bush's Grab for Global Power!"

And so, the remedy: *extrusion.* The most murderous variant is al Qaeda's: kill Americans and Jews, expel the new "crusaders" from Araby, and our soil will be holy, the *umma* whole again. ("Seeking to kill Americans and Jews everywhere in the world," Osama bin Laden exhorted Muslims, "is one of the greatest duties, and the good deed most preferred by

* "On Hating the Jews," November 2003.

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Allah.") Elsewhere, the impulse is not physical elimination but pushback, elimination-lite.

The watchword is "anti-hegemonism." America must be repelled because it is the global steamroller that flattens community and solidarity, leaving behind a few rich winners and many poor losers. America is also the great temptress that seduces the rest of the world's children into wolfing down fast food and watching Hollywood violence. Accordingly, the world must resist the hyperpower-turned-empire by going instead for "self-assertion" and "multipolarity"—shibboleths for containing and defanging the American behemoth.

Not only is there a striking family resemblance between anti-Israelism and anti-Americanism, but the two are routinely conjoined in the minds and in the rhetoric of those obsessed with them. Of course, America as "Great Satan" and Israel as "Little Satan" (note the religious language) are metaphors as old as the Khomeinist revolution of 1979. But the pairing of the two Satans is no longer just an Islamic affair. At the anti-Bush demonstrations in Berlin in May 2002, no accompanying posters were held up against Russian or Chinese leaders, let alone against Saddam Hussein, but plenty against Ariel Sharon—as "oppressor," "warmonger," and "state terrorist." Why trundle out Sharon unless to suggest that the enemy was both America and Israel?

Another regular occurrence is the application of Nazi imagery to both America and Israel. At demonstrations against the Iraq war last year, one German poster showed an obviously Jewish figure setting the world aflame. Another proclaimed: "USA-Third Reich, Both Alike" (*USA-Drittes Reich, Ihr seid so gleich*). Still another stated: "One Hitler Is Enough" (the unspoken message being, Bush equals Hitler). To top them all, a placard read: "Remember Nuremberg, Mr. Bush: Death by Hanging." Franz Alt, a German author and TV moderator, denouncing Bush as the "greatest enemy of mankind," seemed to be echoing the old Nazi slogan: "*Die Juden sind unser Unglück*—the Jews are our misfortune."

Still, similarities are not sameness, and parallels are not proof. What are the psychic compulsions that turn Israel and the U.S. into joint targets of hatred and contempt? The simplest answer is that both of these two outriggers of the Occident are different from the rest of the West—different in the same way—and differences, especially when flanked by assertiveness and achievement, do not for fondness make.

To my mind, these differences come in a foursome, of which the first component is power. Specifically, Israel and the United States are the most advanced and powerful players in their respective neighborhoods—Israel in its region, the United States on the global beat. Unvanquished in war, they possess armies unmatched by any of their rivals. America's economy is the world's largest, its technology the world's most sophisticated. The Israeli economy outperforms those of its four Arab neighbors combined. In some technology sectors, like avionics, Israel surpasses even the major powers of Europe. America's top universities are the world's best, and whereas the Arab world boasts not a single true research university, Israel has seven. If America is Gulliver unbound, Israel is a constant and grating reminder of Arab failure.

We need not invoke Freud to infer that success breeds envy and resentment. The indignation is compounded by the rampant modernity both countries epitomize. Relentless change, inflicted from outside, does not sit well with European society, let alone with Arab societies. The European dispensation favors social and economic protection, while the Arab model seems suspended among various reactionary utopias ranging from state socialism to Islamism. The unconscious logic goes like this: modernization is Americanization, and both have found their most faithful disciple in Israel.

The second element has to do with identity. Compared with continental Europe, the U.S. and Israel stand out for their strong sense of nationhood. For all their actual multiculturalism—indeed, both the U.S. and Israel are ethnic microcosms of the world—these two countries share a keen sense of self. They know who they are, and what they want to be. They define themselves in terms not of ethnicity but of ideology—*novus ordo seclorum*, Zionism—that transcends tribe and class (though not, in Israel's case, religion) and is ultimately rooted in founding documents like both countries' declarations of independence. Both of their national myths are written in the language of salvation. Indeed, the Puritans, seeking to build a "new Jerusalem" in a "promised land," consciously patterned their own flight from England on the biblical exodus from Egypt. America may be the most "Jewish" nation in the Christian world.

Compare this sense of nationhood with the mindset of Western Europe's mature democracies. The polities extending from Italy via Germany and the Low Countries through Scandinavia may al-

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ready have passed into post-nationalism. The European Union is fitfully undoing national sovereignty without providing its citizens with a common identity. "Europe" is still a matter of practicality, not of pride. As a work in progress, it lacks the underpinning of emotional attachment. Europeans become all wound up when their own country's soccer team wins or loses, but the fierce nationalism that once drove millions into the trenches of two world wars has evaporated, and with it has gone the thirst to identify oneself with a glorious national past or with heart-stirring national traditions.

With a strong sense of national identity comes, typically, a sense of national purpose and the determination if necessary to back it up with force; this is the third element I would point to. Post-national Europe cherishes its "civilian power," its attachment to international regimes and institutions. Individual European armies are no longer repositories of nationalism or career advancement, but organizations with about as much social prestige as the post office. Europeans pride themselves on having overcome the atavism of war in favor of compromise, cooperation, and institutionalism. This self-perception imbues them with a sense of moral superiority vis-à-vis the "yahoos" in Washington and Jerusalem, who over the last 50 years have resorted to force more frequently than any other Western nations.

Perhaps many Europeans resent unconsciously what they no longer have—all those qualities that once made them fierce and fearsome warriors. Perhaps they resent these two nations in the Western family for doing what they no longer can—or dare—do. And here is another way in which both Israel and the U.S. offer an excellent canvas for the projection of others' superior self-image. Do not the two countries behave in the brutish ways we Europeans have at last unlearned? They are Hobbes and Machiavelli, we are Kant and Rousseau. They insist on war and domination, we on peace and community. And so, Europe's conscience, forged in the cozy shelter of America's strategic might, abounds with reassurance: we have frog-leaped the barbarians and landed in history's moral avant-garde.

THIS IS hardly to deny the strong currents of post-nationalism that run through California's Marin County, not to mention Tel Aviv's Sheinkin Street and the writings of Israel's "post-Zionists." But along with the influences of culture and psychology we must come back in the end to power and politics—in short, to the positions of America and Israel in the international system.

Israel will remain a threatened polity, and the U.S. the world's number-one power, probably for the rest of this century. These are the raw and irreducible facts of international politics. Ehud Barak and Bill Clinton may have enjoyed a better press than do George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon, but that merely obscures the deeper realities. Both countries remain targets not only for what they do, but also for what and where they are.

What they do is sometimes unwise or nasty; where they are, in the international scheme of things, can be changed only by sacrificing their exceptionalism and the power needed to secure it. Without extraordinary strength and the willingness to use it, Israel will not endure as a state among those who deny it legitimacy, nor America as a Jeffersonian "empire of liberty" seeking safety in the *juste milieu* of a democratizing world.

No Western European country has been attacked since 1945. No wonder, then, that the martial instincts of the Europeans have faded along with their militaries in the course of a seemingly perpetual peace. No wonder, then, that they resent Israel and America as the reprobate children of the West. But nations in harm's way cannot and will not soon evolve into Sweden or Germany—not in the Hobbesian world of the Levant, and not on the precarious perch of the "last remaining superpower." By dint of what they are and what they have, America and Israel will remain both targets and warriors.

The anatomy of the international system, to borrow one last time from Freud, is destiny. On post-nationalism, postmodernism, and the rest, where you sit is where you stand. America and Israel are the outsiders—just as Jews have been all the way into the 21st century. The question yet to be decided, and on which everything hangs, is who will prevail.

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Next of Kin

A Story

Jennifer Moses

Annie just wants her mother to die already. Is that so much to ask? The old woman no longer recognizes her, and anyway she hadn't been much of a bargain in the mother department even before she lost her short-term memory, her ability to control her bladder, and most of her jewelry. Why shouldn't she give up the ghost? Other people's mothers weren't so stubborn, so tenacious and difficult and selfish. Other people's mothers didn't insist on celebrating their ninetieth, and then their ninety-first and ninety-second and ninety-fifth birthdays even though they hadn't a clue what year they'd been born in or, for that matter, what were the names of their own children. Including Annie's, though Annie is the only one of Ruth's aging offspring who bothers to visit her, and even though she herself had been scheduled to die over three years ago. Which only goes to show you how much doctors know.

Well, it's a damn shame—a shame and a waste and a nuisance. Annie feels like a person trapped in a really bad late-night movie, or like one of those people who go about their business year in and year out only to snap one day and open fire with a machine gun in a crowded supermarket. She can picture it: herself pressing the trigger as middle-aged women in Ralph Lauren wraparound skirts and Gap capri pants drop like flies in front of the deli counter at the Safeway. And why, after all, does she—of all people—have to be the chosen one? Why not either of her distinctly cancer-free siblings, both of them on their third marriages, with grown children and grandchildren, not to mention hair?

Her brother, in particular, seems fully capable: an orthodontist who in middle age has reembraced what he refers to as "the family faith and the faith of our fathers." Richard is solid, superficial, happy in his opinions, a contented mind in a robust body. Annie, by contrast, possesses neither health nor contentment, and her husband, though still her husband, has long since disappeared inside himself, where things are quiet, and where he can think. He is a retired professor of public health, at Johns Hopkins, and mainly what he likes to do is read and take walks with Mutt, their very overweight black lab. When he gets back to the house, disposing Mutt's business in the trashcan out back, he sits in his study reading, Mutt at his feet, or writing things on the computer. Annie doesn't know what he writes, or to whom.

"At least he didn't leave you," her sister Marion said some years back, after Annie had finished her third or fourth round of chemotherapy and Marion, in a rare display of maturity, had actually gotten on an airplane and flown to Baltimore to help.

"Why would he leave me?"

"Well," her sister continued, in the breathy, hur-

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ried way that she'd perfected as a child, and that, as far as Annie was concerned, had never ceased to sound affected and silly. "You know how men are. The second something goes wrong, they trade you in for a jazzier model."

"Paul?" Annie said, thinking about her skinny, handsome, nervous, bookish husband, his inability to make small talk, his habit of picking his toes and sweeping the leavings onto the floor.

"Didn't you once tell me that every year there was some graduate student or another with a crush on him?"

"Paul is almost seventy."

"So?"

So? But that's just like her sister, always digging for dirt. Her sister had left her second and longest-term husband to marry her high-school sweetheart. The two of them now live in a new brick house in a suburb of Atlanta, which Annie thinks is hideously ugly (the suburb, not the house, which is airy and filled with Marion's superb collection of early-American antiques), and take a lot of vacations. Marion looks the part, too: lots of jewelry, perfectly manicured nails, not enough lines in her sixty-eight-year-old face.

"Just be glad he's stayed put, is all I'm saying," Marion had finally said. As if the man would ever leave. As if the man could seduce anyone, let alone a bright young woman. He hasn't been interested in making love to Annie for years, long before her life became a series of trips to the oncologist. The truth is, the man is vaguely asexual, has been for some time. His balding head shines, like an ornament; his eyes blink behind thick glasses; he wears soft old Dockers and button-down shirts. True, he and Annie still sleep in the same bed, but from habit, and without connection. They don't even talk. A part of her wishes he would leave, let her get on with the business of being sick, without his useless hovering: he hovers like a hovercraft, his face blank, his delicate hands (the hands of an intellectual, in a former life he would have been a rabbi) begging for something to do. He bothers her is what he does.

OR DID; she's no longer so dismissive. These days she finds her husband's ineffectual worrying steadying, almost gratifying. She enjoys the idea of his making scrambled eggs and toast—the sum total of his culinary expertise—searching perhaps for his favorite blackberry preserves. She's come to rely on her sure knowledge that, as silent as air, as amorphous as water, he is in his study, staring at the computer screen or lying on his beat-up sofa, and—who knows?—perhaps dreaming, too. Dreaming of his glory days when his lecture rooms were packed, and every semester brought a new invitation to speak at a conference, or contribute to some obscure journal. *Issues in Community Health. Public Health Law*. Dreaming of the early days of their marriage, when she was pretty—startlingly so, with straight thick black hair cut short like a boy's, and a hard athletic body that rose to his touch—and he was promising. Oh, so promising. The wonder boy, the prodigy, the phenomenon, the genius. The two of them, together and apart, had possessed a kind of radiance.

Now Paul is retired, and she has an enormous scar from where the doctors removed her uterus and a large part of her bowel, a bathroom crammed with anti-nausea drugs, and a very expensive, not-very-realistic-looking wig that itches her but that she nevertheless wears whenever she visits her mother, on the theory that, on top of everything else, she doesn't want the old woman to worry about her, even though she's well aware that Ruth no longer so much as recognizes her, let alone knows that she is, once again, in chemotherapy.

It has become her life, these drips administered via IV through the port the doctors have dug out of her chest just below her left collarbone, in that room filled with other women, some of them even worse off than she, all of them just sitting there and reading magazines as if they were in the beauty shop. Sometimes, they talk. They talk and talk. They talk about husbands who still want to have sex even though their own insides are dry as dust. They talk about their children. They talk about their mounting bills. The religious ones talk about God. They talk about bowel movements: the distinct and newly unpleasant odor on the second day after Taxol, the slightly burned smell after being dosed with Carboplatinum. All those women, dying together.

But her mother knows about none of this. How can she? Her brains are all shriveled-up. She wears a diaper. She sits in a chair in the corner by the window in her room in the bonkers ward all day, reading the same page of the *New York Times* over and over again. Sometimes she looks up and says, "I'll take questions now." Sometimes, too, when Annie visits her, a look comes across her face that partially suggests, if not recognition, then at least familiarity. But then the look vanishes and Ruth says: "Are you the nurse?"

It makes Annie want to scream—that blank, suspicious look that comes over her mother's features at the sight of her. It makes her want to pick up the

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paperweight on Ruth's useless and unused desk and bring it down right in the middle of the pale pink part in her hair. It wouldn't take much, and that would be it. Freedom. Peace. If that makes her a matricide, so be it. Anything would be better than this, this nothingness, this constant rerun of the present.

Which is why, when the chief administrator at the extremely expensive nursing home calls to say that Ruth has pneumonia and has been taken to the hospital, Annie feels a distinct rush of hope, like a girl who's been praying for months that a certain boy will notice her and call. Perhaps, Annie thinks, this time it's the real thing, and her mother will finally succumb. It is late November: a greasy, disappointing time of year.

"But I must tell you, Annie," the administrator continues, "that she's in a rather excitable state, confused, you know, poor thing. I worry, because of course with this infection she could throw herself into a fit, you know how she gets. I mean, even with the best medicine in the world, things can happen."

There is a pause, and then Annie, rescuing her, says, "Don't worry. My mother is never going to die."

BEFORE SHE got sick, Annie was a guidance counselor. Unlike the days when her own children were in high school, and what guidance counselors mainly did was help kids figure out what college to apply to, she had to get a master's degree in social work before she could so much as think about applying for a job in the public schools. But Paul had been disappointed. Why didn't she take that degree and work with the poor, or help drug addicts, or grapple with the foster-care system? God knows, this was *Baltimore*: between the unemployment, the drugs, the teenage pregnancy, and the overall despair, there was enough work for an army of high-minded, college-educated women embarking on midlife careers. So why on earth did she want to work with a bunch of suburban kids from affluent homes?

In those days, Paul wore a beard and attended a lot of conferences in Arizona. Why, why, why? he'd say, pointing out all the opportunities that a woman of Annie's abilities, intelligence, and moral sensitivity might have, the difference she could make. Her mother, who was still in full command of her formidable persona, had sided with Paul, adding that Annie didn't have to settle for being what Ruth called a "school marm." "Times have changed, daughter," she would say. "Why go backward?"

Because she wanted to, that's why. Because she liked kids, teenagers in particular: in fact she was fascinated by them, their wistfulness, their dreaminess, the way they reinvented themselves on a daily basis. Their moodiness appealed to her; she found their awkwardness endearing. She loved to watch them talk to each other, the girls unsure of what to do with their hips, the boys squaring their shoulders. They didn't make her feel young, but they did make her feel hopeful. Useful, too. The kids liked her—they *warmed* to her. She knew how to talk to them. She knew how to make them laugh.

Annie herself had been a carefree, happy girl, a girl to whom things—good grades, the right friends, admiration—came easily. She'd had, in her own youth, a wide-open heart, a beautiful mother, a father who loved her, and a lot of trophies, for basketball and softball and swimming, even diving, in which, during her last year of high school, she had been the district champ. Perhaps, she reasoned, if she could only get back in there, with the kids and all their hopeful anxiety, her former optimism—ah, but the world had once shined for her!—might return.

That was in the mid-80's, when the last of her daughters had finished college and Annie, like most of the women she knew in her generation, needed to find something to do. Several (Elsbeth Stuart, Hilary Levy) had started traveling around the world with their husbands: Japan, the Isle of Skye, Antarctica. They came back with beads, or small, smooth sculptures carved out of wood, or dense silk woven into extraordinary patterns. Annie felt a twinge of envy when they told her stories of their adventures, but contented herself with the knowledge that she was doing something, if not sexy or glamorous, then at least commendable.

And it was a real job, too, with a regular salary and benefits, an office and coworkers, not merely a time-filler like the part-time positions in book stores or on philanthropic boards that some of her women friends had. She wasn't the only woman in the world who preferred the routine and the concrete—her small, windowless, cinder-block office, the smell of chalk and nervousness and hormones, the principal's voice crackling over the school's P.A. system—to the promise of adventure, or enlightenment, or ease. She wasn't the only woman among her circle who had gone back to school so she could get an actual job—not that she had anything against women who dabbled, or women who had married wealthy men who were able to pay for their wives' facelifts and put them up in four-star hotels in elegant European capitals. It was just that

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Annie hadn't married a wealthy man who could put her up in a four-star hotel in an elegant European capital. She had married Paul, and Paul was a professor of public health. Their vacations, when they took them, tended to be to laid-back, rustic places: a modest rental in North Carolina or Vermont, a cross-country trip to the Grand Canyon.

But handsome he had certainly been, her Paul: tall, thin, with an intellectual's beaky face, and, in those days at least, a head of curly salt-and-pepper hair. He spoke softly but with authority. In the winter, he wore a woolen scarf. He was indeed the kind of man that graduate students had crushes on. Several young women—idealistic, bright, ambitious—had formed such attachments in the past. But it wasn't a graduate student he'd left her for. It was solitude.

AS SHE rides the elevator to the fifth floor (geriatrics, pulmonary), Annie issues a fervent if somewhat hypocritical prayer: *Take her, please*. She doesn't much believe in God; nor does she believe in any kind of justice in the world. Just about the only thing she does believe in these days is her mother's amazing, persistent, obnoxious vigor.

The last time her mother suffered a medical crisis, Annie had been in New York, visiting her youngest daughter. She and Ellen had gone to Saks Fifth Avenue, and then out for Chinese. When they got back from dinner, there was a message on the machine from Paul. Ruth had been taken to the hospital with a bad flu. "Looks like this might be it," he said. "You'd better give me a call." When Annie phoned, he said, "Don't you think you'd better come home?" She'd thought about it for a second, then said no. She didn't want to come home (how often was it that she was feeling well enough to go to New York?), and at any rate she didn't believe that her mother was on her way out. The hospital, however, failed to heed Annie's instructions that Ruth not be left alone, and the next day Paul called to report that she was missing. "Missing?" Annie said. An hour later, he called again to say that she'd been found in the maternity ward, where she was helping herself to somebody's leftover toast from a hospital trolley that had been parked near the stairwell.

Her mother is at the end of the hall, in a small private room with a view of a rooftop covered with icy-looking dark puddles, and a framed picture depicting European peasants working in a sun-washed field. Ruth is lying on her back with the covers pulled up neatly under her arms and an oxygen mask on her face. A nurse is standing over her, taking her pulse. She is middle-aged, attractive, with a pretty, pampered mouth. All this Annie takes in with an apprehensive glance. The room is too hot. She takes off her coat.

"Knock knock," she says. "It's me, Mother. Your daughter. Annie."

Ruth's bright blue eyes slide toward her, then blink.

"How's she doing?" Annie asks the nurse.

"She's comfortable, I think, but awfully weak."

"Okay."

"But I think she's feeling a little better now, aren't you sweetie?" the nurse continues. "Your heart just goes out to the old ones."

Ruth's blinking again, a sign that she's either frustrated or excited, and a moment later she is struggling to rid herself of the mask. Before the nurse has a chance to turn around and readjust things, or Annie has a chance to warn her, Ruth has it off her face. Annie hears hard rasping sounds as her mother struggles for air, sees her mother's mouth struggling to make shapes. A moment later, she succeeds. "You look like a witch," Ruth says.

"Well, I'm not a witch, Mother. I'm your daughter Annie."

The oxygen mask is back on now, the nurse patting things down, checking the tubing, making sure everything is as it should be. Through the clear plastic Annie can see her mother's mouth form the word, *Annie*, as if she were testing it out, tasting it on her tongue and deciding that after all it wasn't to her liking. Her feathery white hair splays out on the pillow. Her perfect oval nails are painted a pale, luminescent pink.

"She's a live one," the nurse says.

"That would be my mother."

"Try not to excite her, okay?"

Why did they always say that? Maybe it was just something they learned in nursing school, or from watching hospital shows on TV. Why *not* excite her, Annie always wanted to ask. What's the worst thing that could happen? That she'd have an instant of clarity or, better, a fatal heart attack? This is such a tragedy?

"Don't worry," Annie says. "My mother will outlast all of us." The nurse, clearly unsure how to respond, puts a half-hearted smile on her face and exits the room.

"Well, Mother," Annie says. "I guess it's just me and you."

It was six years ago, at this same hospital, that Annie had awakened from surgery to discover that she was living in the land of the sick. She'd been taken back to her room with tubes down her

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throat. Her daughters had taped up crayon drawings made by their small children. "Get Well Soon Grandma." "I Love You." She shakes off the memory. It makes her too sad to think of herself then: still so hopeful, still so innocent.

At one point, early on, she'd believed that she would be one of the lucky ones, one of those miraculous cases that you sometimes read about who, against all odds, fight the good fight and come out on top. She'd actually told her daughters not to bother coming in for her first chemotherapy session. Though she wasn't looking forward to it, she claimed, she was eager to get going so she could put the whole thing behind her. She'd planned on returning to her job in a few days, and then resuming full-time as soon as the treatment was over.

And then the chemo hit her and she was bald and nauseated and shaking and sweaty and plagued by diarrhea and cramps and dry mouth and mouth sores and swollen feet like two wet loaves of bread. Her body shriveled up until she was smaller than she had been at the height of her high-school glory. And then her body bloated, becoming ungainly with fat and bulges, her muscles losing all tone, her skin becoming blotchy, until at last the brave black jokes she'd made at the beginning of her treatment seemed as absurd and awful as a laugh track.

It will be a long day, she thinks, made longer, no doubt, by quiet. Apart from Paul, and her daughters (whom she trusts), no one knows that Ruth is in the hospital. She feels slightly guilty about this, but she just can't deal with either her sister's ongoing and unnecessary alarm or her brother's platitudes. She doesn't want to reassure either one of them. She's tired of being the good sport. And anyway she's fairly certain that Ruth is going to pull through. She knows her mother, and senses, in her high color, and the way her hands are curling on top of the clean white sheets, that the old woman has yet to give up her formidable will. She can tell by her defiance: *You look like a witch!* It's true though: she does look like a witch. Skin as white and dry as powder; eyes shrunken within folds of fat; a wig that could be part of a Halloween costume.

Ruth's eyes flutter open, then close again.

"Don't worry, Mom," Annie says. "I'm not going anywhere. At least not today." Ruth opens her eyes again, stares, then says: "Are you the nurse?"

"I'm your daughter, Annie."

A look of hurt bewilderment comes over Ruth's face.

"But you're a fighter," Ellen says on the phone from New York after Annie tells her that, if she didn't have Ruth to look after, she doesn't think she'd bother to keep going.

"I'm not so sure about that."

There's a heavy silence. Ellen never did care for declarative sentences, and hates being contradicted. Even as a young girl she preferred subterfuge, a certain amount of beating-around-the-bush, a certain avoidance, as if not saying bad or negative things flat-out would heighten the possibility of their not coming true.

"But, Mom," Ellen says. "Do you think Nana really might die? Do you think this is it?"

"I don't think so, but I'm praying it is."

"But, Mom, even if Nana goes, you're still young in spirit, and that's what counts." As if adding a second cliché to the first carried any kind of rhetorical weight. Ellen can't help it. Annie loves this third and youngest child of hers: loves her bouncy certainties, the ease with which she greets the world. But Ellen is an editor at a women's magazine, and her sense of language has been both flattened and distended from years of editing articles with titles like, "How Do You Know When It's the Real Thing?" and "Sex Kitten 101."

"Anyway, Mom," Ellen says, "they're coming out with new treatments all the time. You yourself said so."

Had she? Well, maybe she had, but then again, she's said a lot of things she never really meant. It's the curse of being a woman, she supposes. You just talk and talk and talk, sometimes for no other reason than to fill up the silence, and also because if you don't say something, everything might simply, mysteriously, fall apart.

At one point, Annie had loved her mother. Ruth hadn't been easy to love, either. Proud, haughty, domineering, she'd run her family as if always expecting photographers from *Life* magazine to burst through the door, eager to capture some quintessence of American-style domestic perfection: the three kids, the two dogs, the house swathed in chintz, the gardens blooming out back, the maid in the kitchen, the beautiful young mother in silk stockings and tailored two-piece suits.

Larchmont, New York: German Jews in love with high Wasp style is what they were. More English than the English. She was a piece of work, her mother: a woman who'd grown up as the daughter of Jewish immigrant shopkeepers in a small town in Kentucky and somewhere along the line had decided that she needed a grander space, some place that would do her justice.

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As a young mother herself, Annie had dreaded her mother's visits, knowing she couldn't stand up to her sharp tongue, or critical eye, the sheer force of her personality. Although she'd disappointed her mother by marrying Paul, a man from no background to speak of (his father owned a deli in Queens, and used Yiddish) and no money, either, she had managed to win Ruth's approval by pointing out that Paul was a true intellectual, a budding scholar, a *genius*, and that anyway neither she nor he wanted to live in grand style. And Hopkins? It wasn't Harvard, maybe, but it sure as hell wasn't Brooklyn College. Let Marion marry the hungry young lawyer (husband number one) and build an enormous modern house in White Plains. Let Richard cover his wife (wives) with jewelry. She, Annie, was happy with simpler things.

But when she came to visit, Ruth would invariably rearrange the furniture, fuss about the children's clothing, and pass comments on the general untidiness of Annie's house and the parochial quality of Baltimore. All of which made Annie shrink into herself, see herself with her mother's eye: a daughter too stupid to recognize that there was a right way to do things, or perhaps, simply, without the charm, the grace, to get what she wanted. "You don't get bored here, daughter?" Ruth would ask. "No, I suppose you don't. You've always been resourceful that way."

But the truth was that Annie loved her mother, always had. She loved her with an instinctive, open-hearted, wet love, the love of a dog for its master, or a child for its first teacher. She loved her just because.

"You sure she's gonna pull through?" It's her brother Richard on the phone, calling directly to Ruth's room. Paul, once again, directing traffic. "You sure you don't want me to come in, spot you some relief?"

"It's okay," Annie says. "She's looking pretty alert, for her. I think she'll probably go home soon."

"But if she doesn't, then what? How many days do you plan to baby-sit her? For Christ's sake, Annie-bananie, you have cancer. You need to take it easy."

"I know." Annie feels a distinct wave of annoyance creep up her spine. She's always hated Richard's childhood nickname for her, and it especially grates now, when, of the two of them, she is the one who is clearly more grown-up, wiser and more accepting of reality, while he is the one who is clearly full of shit. It's all an act, anyhow, all that I'll-be-there-for-you stuff. He wouldn't leave his comfortable North Shore house and his pretty third wife to sit by Ruth's hospital bed even if it meant points in heaven—or at his stuffy, downtown synagogue.

"Ugh," Ruth says from her hospital bed.

"You okay, Mother?"

"Who are you?" Ruth says.

On the other end of the line Richard is saying, "What is it? Is something going on there? Tell me," in a way that is so out of proportion to the reality of Ruth's brief burst of energy that Annie almost laughs. When in doubt, panic. Show that you care.

"Nothing, Richard," Annie at last answers. "Just Mother mumbling things. I told you that she's going to be okay. Or at least I think she is."

"She is amazing."

"That she is."

AFTER THEIR conversation, Annie resettles herself in the visitor's chair (covered, like most visitors' chairs in most hospitals, in a muddy pink) and takes out her needlepoint. She is making a pillow for her youngest granddaughter. When she's finished it will have a large white half-moon inside a starry sky and a legend that says, "Reach for the moon." But now all it has is a few rows of blue. Her hands don't work properly, is part of the problem. She works slowly, slowly, thinking of the look on the little girl's face. If her mother stays here much longer, perhaps she will make real headway. She'd like to finish it while she still can.

At eleven, a team of young doctors comes into the room. They bend over Ruth's body, look under her eyelids and down her throat, listen to her chest, bustle out again. At twelve, an orderly comes in with a full tray, then reads Ruth's chart and backs away. A little after that, Annie takes a walk down the corridor, then decides to do a complete lap. Perhaps when she returns to her chair she can start the novel that she's brought along.

"Really, Mother," she says as she settles back into the puke-pink chair. "You've got everyone all riled up." She does this sometimes—chats with the old lady, if only to brighten the air in the room and feel a little less alone. It reminds her of the one time she went to see a psychotherapist, back in the early 70's when she and Paul were having problems. On that occasion she learned two things about herself that she already knew. One, that her mother was very dominating, and always had been; ergo, she, Annie, was accustomed to doing as she was told. And, two, that her

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husband had difficulty communicating anything more personal than the weather. After more than a year of listening to herself talk, she decided that her time would be better spent reading, or playing tennis. She ended up taking piano lessons. (Another thing she can no longer do: play the piano.)

Taking up her needlepoint again, she resumes. "And for what? Because even if you're capable of fooling everyone else, you can't fool me. I know your tricks. I'm on to you, Mother." Her mother breathes, breathes, the oxygen turning her blood bright blue, expanding the lining of her lungs, dancing through her veins. Amazing, how even now the old woman seems so sure of herself, so calm, so *grounded*. "I know how stubborn you are, how you always have to have your own way. But I'm losing patience, Mother. I'm just so tired. Look at me, if you don't believe me. Can you even recognize me? I barely recognize myself.

"At first it wasn't so bad. Not that I wasn't sick. My God I was sick. But I was optimistic. I read all this stuff, you know, about the mind-body connection, how hope keeps you going, hope and something to live for, some goal or mission. It's a whole new industry, cancer. Not just the medical end of it, either. You should see the books on the subject. Eating right to beat cancer. Doing yoga to beat cancer. Meditating. Some women get into these all-women groups and do God knows what. Bray at the moon. Recite poetry. Journaling your way through chemo. Not that any of it works. But I read everything, and I was actually feeling upbeat. For a while I was even able to keep working. I marched off to school with my wig and my antinausea meds and I drew my eyebrows on and I was going to be one of those brave women who simply tough things out, beat the odds, surprise everyone. If I couldn't do it, I thought, who could? I was going to be the best cancer patient ever, you know, win a trophy for it or something. A blue ribbon. But most days I was too sick to do anything but lie on the sofa.

"And that was *then*, before all three girls were married or had families of their own. What's supposed to keep me going now? My marriage is boring, and that's the least of it. Not that you were right when you objected to Paul. You objected for all the wrong reasons. You actually thought the man wouldn't ever add up to anything, which, let me tell you, Mother, is so ludicrous that words fail to convey the total ludicrousness of your snobbery. The truth was the opposite. He was a big big star, you know. He just never added up to much of a husband. Not the world's worst, but not exactly the greatest. Steady, in his way. I'll give him that. But in bed? Forget it. He has more passion for Mutt than for me. Even when we were younger, there was a certain, shall we say *lassitude*?, about his lovemaking. Of course I didn't know any better. How could I? Like everyone else I was a virgin. We both were. But you know I always wanted a man who would sort of just take me—not violently, but with a certain firmness of purpose. Whereas Paul would just kind of lie there, his mind drifting off, and occasionally reach over or something, then drift back. Sometimes he'd just kind of stop in the middle and start talking about a problem he was having with his research, or some ethical dilemma having to do with how to allocate medical resources, or whether or not it's ethical to tie the tubes of retarded women, or I don't know. It's a miracle, really, that I had any children at all. And then of course, after Ellen came along—well, things just went splat. He just wasn't interested."

She stops, readjusts her needlepoint, and then glances up at her mother. Ruth's blue eyes are open, and looking directly at her.

"Your father was a wonderful lover," she says.

"What did you say, Mother?"

"Is that you, Annie?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll be damned."

"Mother?"

But Ruth has once again retreated into the innermost spaces of her reverie.

The phone call informing Annie that her mother has died comes in the middle of the night. "We're sorry to startle you like this," the doctor—who sounds young, and nervous—says.

"But as next of kin—" and she goes on from there, reciting all kinds of perfunctory things. She sounds tired, tired. Perhaps she's a resident, going on two hours' sleep. Perhaps she's just too tired to care. Or perhaps, more likely, she just can't get all worked up about the death of a woman on the verge of her ninety-sixth year.

Paul's side of the bed is empty, a sign that he couldn't sleep. Annie gets up, pulls a bathrobe around her, and pads down to his study, where she finds him dozing in his favorite chair, Mutt snoring at his feet. On the floor beside Mutt is one of their family photo albums.

"Didn't you hear the phone ring?" Annie says,

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waking Paul, who looks slightly guilty and slightly confused. Mutt remains asleep.

"Sorry. What? What time is it? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Annie says, seating herself gingerly on the edge of Paul's beat-up sofa. "But I just got a phone call from the hospital. Mother's gone."

A blank, wondering look—much like Mutt's, in fact—comes across her brilliant husband's sharp features.

"Dead," Annie says.

"Well, what do you know."

Annie lets the silence wrap around her, along with its implications. Funny, how she feels almost nothing at all, neither grief nor the vast openness of relief that she's so long anticipated. She supposes she should do something—make some phone calls, shed a tear—but nothing comes. She merely feels heavy.

She's about to get up and return to bed when Paul shifts forward in his seat, picks up the photo album from the floor, and says, "You know, I was just looking at this. Sometimes I do that, or rather, I used to. Just sit and look at these photos, from when the girls were small. For some reason I felt like doing that tonight. It's funny, though, how I can't really remember them, remember what they looked like, and more to the point, what they *were* like, how they smelled, how they sounded. I can't conjure them up in my mind except from the photographs. So now when I think of the girls when they were little, what springs to mind is the images from the pictures. My own memory is just this wash. This watercolor. All impressions, no outlines."

"I know what you mean."

"Of course I know what they look like now," Paul continues. "And thank God I still have enough of my marbles to remember the grandchildren. But as for our own kids, when they were little, it's all gone."

ANNIE DOESN'T know what to say. She is aware of how hard Paul is trying, how much he wants to comfort her. The truth is that she, too, can no longer remember the feel of a baby in her arms, or what it was like to nurse (alone among her friends and acquaintances, she had disdained formula) or to kiss a sleepy child goodnight. She can't remember what any of her daughters were like on their first day of kindergarten, or their frequent, unserious fights, or the smell of paste. She can't remember what they wore to their senior proms or the sound of their voices calling her from Paris or Los Angeles or Milan, telling her not to worry, everything was fine, I haven't run out of money, only gotta go, Mom, I don't want to miss the train. She can't remember whether or not they wore lace for their weddings. Perhaps tomorrow she too will go through the photo albums, trying to conjure up her children, and herself, before they disappear entirely.

"You're not going to give up on me, are you?" Paul says.

"I don't know."

"Please don't." The dog is wakeful now, alert, as if eager to hear the outcome of this conversation. His tail thumps back and forth. "It's just, dear, that life wouldn't be much fun without you."

"I know," Annie says.

She is very sad now, as sad as she's ever been. And how badly she longs for sleep, and what a big day she'll have tomorrow! Suddenly she is overcome with fatigue, fatigue like a drug, pulling at all her limbs, making her blood sluggish, her brain heavy. This is how she wants to die, she thinks: in this deep, slumberous peace, in this knowing that there is rest. She gets up to return to the bedroom, but Paul gets up too and pulls her back again, taking her by the hand and tugging her down to sit on the sofa beside him.

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OBSERVATIONS

Lies the Germans Tell Themselves

Bartosz Jalowiecki

IS GERMANY becoming a "normal" country? Having once conquered and brutalized most of Europe, having attempted to exterminate every last Jew on the Continent, can it *ever* become a normal country?

Throughout the postwar era, the German nation mounted an extraordinary effort to achieve reconciliation with its victims and come to terms with its own horrific past. In order to make amends for the Holocaust, the Federal Republic of Germany (which until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 constituted the non-Communist, democratic part of the divided country) began as early as 1951 to pay reparations to Jewish survivors and their offspring. In the decades that have elapsed since then, Germany has settled approximately 4 million claims; today, 100,000 survivors, primarily in Israel and the United States, continue to receive monthly pensions from Berlin.

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After the collapse of Communism and the country's reunification, Germany began to provide assistance to non-Jewish victims of Nazism in Central and Eastern Europe as well—in particular, hundreds of thousands of former forced laborers. All told, Germany's voluntary payments for past wrongs amount thus far to more than $55 billion over a period of almost six decades, and are unparalleled in history.

Nor have the Germans limited their efforts to the monetary realm. In 1999, in an act of great symbolic significance, the German parliament voted to establish a "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe." Designed by the American architect Peter Eisenman and consisting of 2,700 concrete steles arranged in a terror-inspiring maze, the monument will be situated adjacent to Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, that venerable icon of Prussian might, and within eyeshot of the Bundestag. To be completed this year, it is aimed at forcing the memory of Germany's greatest crime upon all who visit the German capital.

Demonstrations of shame and remorse extend far beyond the political elite. When Germany's then-chancellor Willy Brandt traveled to Poland in 1970 and knelt before the memorial to the Jewish heroes of the Warsaw-ghetto uprising, his gesture struck a chord among the German public at large. Innumerable documentary films recounting the barbarities of the past have been shown regularly on German television to vast audiences. The German language itself has registered the impact of this national impulse to self-recrimination and penitence. When I lived in Munich in the 1980's, many of my acquaintances regarded the very designation "German" as a reproach; words associated with the Nazi era, like "*Sieg*" (victory), had virtually disappeared from the spoken and written vocabulary of my German contemporaries.

It is undeniable that the German path toward redemption and normality has in a large sense succeeded. The country has thoroughly reshaped its image, and, although suspicions inevitably linger, nations around the world treat the reunified Federal Republic with respect. Its neighbors have granted Germany a leading role in the most significant political project under way on the continent: the unification of Europe. No one is

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in the least surprised when a Polish minister of defense urges Germany to deploy its troops to the Middle East, or when, even more strikingly, a German general is selected to lead the military parade in Paris on Bastille Day. To the naked eye, Germany appears to have reached the final stage in its metamorphosis from a militarist and barbaric aggressor into a stable, peaceful, European democracy.

AND YET, disquieting signs of one kind or another have never entirely disappeared from view, and today are more salient than at any time in recent memory. Sentiments long thought to be dead and buried have suddenly found renewed voice, not only among the relatively few neo-Nazis and skinheads on the crackpot Right but within the mainstream establishment and on the Left. Although the immediate occasion is, clearly, the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs in the Middle East, deeper currents are no less visibly at work.

A recent incident widely reported in the United States is only part of a much larger story. It concerns a speech by one Martin Hohmann, an obscure backbencher in the Bundestag who is a member of the opposition Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In his speech, Hohmann slurred Jews as a "race of perpetrators," citing, among other pieces of evidence, the alleged role of Jews in the mass killings that followed the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. The speech was bad enough, but no less dramatic was its aftermath: a high-ranking military officer, Brigadier General Reinhard Guenzel, wrote a letter hailing Hohmann's remarks as "courageous," an act for which Guenzel was promptly sacked from his position as head of Germany's special forces. As for the CDU itself, it dithered for several weeks before marshaling the necessary two-thirds majority within its parliamentary caucus to strip Hohmann of his right to vote or speak on the party's behalf. But unhappy members of the CDU are now waging a campaign to reverse that decision under the slogan—or rather the complaint—that "nobody in Germany is allowed to tell the truth any more."

The Hohmann affair is a perfect emblem of the current situation, one that has been characterized by startling and unexpected outbursts of noxious anti-Jewish invective, nervous reversions to postwar standards of correct discourse, and a barely suppressed resentment at the continued imposition of those same standards. It is, by now, an established pattern, whose earliest hint may be traced to the mid-1980's in what came to be called the *Historikerstreit*, or historians' debate.

At the time, the opening salvo was fired by the historian Martin Broszat. The twelve-year Nazi dictatorship in Germany, Broszat argued, breaking with consensus, should no longer be treated as a discrete and exceptional phenomenon but rather placed within a larger European context and examined just like any other chapter of the Continental past. Put in those terms, Broszat's "normalizing" approach to recent German history sounds defensible enough; but darker implications were soon brought to the fore when another historian, Ernst Nolte, asserted that there was not even anything exceptional about the Nazi Holocaust. The extermination camps, in Nolte's judgment, merely mirrored and copied atrocities previously committed on a mass scale by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Stalin; what was more, he declared, going a step further, the incessant harping on the peculiar enormity of Nazi crimes served an unhealthy political agenda, one that amounted to a deliberate attempt to keep Germany from assuming its rightful place among the nations of Europe and the world.

The *Historikerstreit* ended with Nolte and his allies sharply rebuffed by the German mainstream. But a decade later the debate they sparked would break out again, in a different form and with a different cast of characters. In 1998, Martin Walser, a novelist and former radical leftist, decried the "permanent presentation of [German] shame" and the "instrumentalization" of Auschwitz—by which he meant the invocation of Nazi crimes in order to stifle feelings of nationalism among contemporary Germans. Sharply attacked by Ignatz Bubis, president of the Central Board of Jews in Germany, Walser's words also attracted a wave of support, evidenced by the huge number of approving letters published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the newspaper that had given him a forum.

Another straw in the wind was the reception in Germany of a book titled *The Holocaust Industry*. Written by an American leftist named Norman Finkelstein and published in German translation in 1999, this book contended that Holocaust reparations were a fraud perpetrated on German taxpayers by avaricious Jewish organizations, out to enrich their coffers and furnish aid and comfort to the state of Israel in its campaign to oppress Palestinian Arabs. Although critical reactions to the book were mixed, broad sympathy for Finkelstein's ideas was expressed in publications ranging from the conservative *Die Welt* to the liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In short order, *The Holocaust Industry* became a best-seller and Finkelstein, an unknown figure in the United States, a household name in Germany.

NOW, ALMOST a half-decade later, still another twist has become discernible in the unfolding tale of German attitudes toward the past. If, in the first five decades after the war, the focus tended to be on the suffering the Germans had caused to others, today, increasingly, it has shifted to the suffering caused by others to the Germans. Once a motif of the far Right alone, the "victimization" of Germans and Germany in World War II has now begun to attract the attention of intellectuals and activists across the political spectrum.

The process seems to have started in the eastern part of the country, in the five states that joined the Feder-

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al Republic after Communist East Germany ceased to exist. Those states had to be physically rebuilt—not just from the ruins of Communism but also from the still-extant ruins of World War II. This was especially the case in the city of Dresden, the rococo pearl of Saxony that had been destroyed by Allied bombing in the last months of the war. Communist authorities had deliberately left parts of the city in rubble, staging annual commemorations that stressed the evil character of the capitalist "aerial gangsters" who had wrought the devastation.

After Germany's reunification, with the government in Berlin undertaking to reconstruct Dresden's architectural treasures, these annual commemorations grew in size and importance. In short order, the bombings not only of Dresden but of other major cities became the subject of two widely popular books. The first of them, *On the Natural History of Destruction** by the acclaimed novelist W. G. Sebald, accused the postwar German elite of having scanted this tragedy even as the traumatized victims themselves had entered into a silent agreement not to speak about what they had experienced. The second and much more extreme book, *The Fire: Germany During the Bombardment, 1940-1945* by the historian Jörg Friedrich,† assembled all of the known data about the Allied bombing campaign into a searing 600-page indictment. Using terms drawn from the Nazi lexicon (like *Einsatzgruppen*, the task forces specializing in the murder of Jews, to refer to the Allied bomber squadrons, and "crematoria" to describe the cellars turned into furnaces by Allied bombs), Friedrich tacitly equated Germany's victims with German victims. Fittingly enough, publication of his book engendered a debate over whether Winston Churchill should be considered a war criminal.

THE ALLIED bombing campaign is not the only chapter of the past being pored over for evidence of German victimization. Another momentous episode is the story of the so-called German "expellees." Before World War II, German territory had extended much farther to the east than it does today, encompassing Pomerania, East Prussia, and large parts of Silesia. There were also sizable ethnic German minorities living in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Baltics, and the Balkans. In the fall of 1944, as the tide of war turned decisively against Hitler and the Red Army marched on Berlin, millions of these Germans fled westward, never to return to their former homes. After the war was over, those who remained behind were forcibly transferred to Germany by the new Communist authorities.

The legal basis for this postwar transfer lay in the Potsdam Protocols of 1945, in which the U.S., Great Britain, and the USSR—the Big Three—agreed that the move was necessary and should be "effected in an orderly and humane manner." In practice, needless to say, the Communists behaved rather differently: murders and rapes were not uncommon, and the Germans were often forcibly shipped to their new homes in cargo trains like so much livestock. Absorbing so many people in a country already ravaged by war also proved to be an immense challenge involving untold hardship.

In the late 1990's, the fate of these expellees became a subject of intense interest in Germany. In part, this reawakening of memory was linked to the violent ethnic fragmentation of Yugoslavia, especially the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo, where the spectacle of mass executions, ethnic cleansing, and deportations shocked the conscience of many on the German Left. Becoming convinced that Germany had a moral obligation to stop the mayhem, the ruling coalition of Social Democrats and Greens found unexpected support for its interventionist position from the League of Expelled Germans, the largest and most influential group representing German "victims" of World War II.

For the League, the horrific pictures from Yugoslavia being broadcast daily on German television represented a unique opportunity to advertise its own cause. "The crimes of mass deportations are to be deplored," declared *Das Ostpreussenblatt*, its leading publication, "but where is the outrage at the ethnic cleansing . . . [and] expulsion and murder of millions of [our] compatriots? It's felt for all other nations. . . . Hasn't the time finally come to proclaim an end to reticence about German victims?"

To Erika Steinbach, the League's leader and an influential member of the Christian Democratic Union, what was needed to end the reticence was obvious: a memorial "historically and physically close" to Berlin's Holocaust Memorial and meant to commemorate the suffering endured by those who had been forced to leave territories lost by the German Reich. Thanks in no small part to Steinbach's efforts, what began as a fringe issue on the outer rims of ultra-conservative politics has rapidly moved to center stage, garnering support from prominent members of Gerhard Schroeder's center-Left coalition, from the two Christian-Democratic parties, from the liberal Free Democrats, and from a variety of prominent figures in German economic and intellectual life. The League now hopes to obtain a building in the heart of Berlin and taxpayer money to underwrite an institution to be called the Center Against Expulsions.

IS THIS the sign of a "normal" country coming to terms with its past, and becoming healthier by the day?

There can be no doubt that, for the Germans who had to leave their homes during and immediately after

* Translated by Anthea Bell, Random House, 224 pp., $23.95.

† *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg, 1940-1945* (2002), to be published in English in the U.S. by Columbia University Press. A companion volume of photographs, *Brandstätten* ("Places of Fire"), was released in Germany this past October.

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World War II, including a great many innocent people, the deportations were a deeply traumatic experience, entailing hardship on a massive scale. But who was responsible for this uprooting? In its formal request for public funding, the League places the blame squarely on Germany's "new masters" in the postwar era—that is, the Big Three. In fact, however, it was not the Allies who brought about this fate but the Nazis who went to war with the world in 1939.

Of course the Communists hardly had clean hands in the matter, and their motives in transferring ethnic Germans out of the territories they had conquered were mixed at best. But if there was little opposition to the idea on the part of the other Allies, it is because, in light of the monstrous crimes committed everywhere by the Nazis, few at the time believed that it was possible for Germans to continue living side by side with the populations they had so cruelly exploited and terrorized.

Nor was that all. By and large, in the prewar era the ethnic Germans in the east had identified themselves with Hitler's program. During the war itself, many had enthusiastically helped to implement it. In 1938, for example, more than 90 percent of the Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovakia voted for the pro-Nazi party of Konrad Henlein, and supported incorporation of the Sudetenland into greater Germany—thereby betraying the country of which they were citizens. Their separatist clamor, which included rioting against the democratically elected government in Prague, led directly to the Munich conference of 1938, from there to Hitler's march into the Sudetenland, and ultimately to the chain of events that ignited global war. Finally, among the Germans later expelled from the east were many officers and members of the Gestapo, the SS, the Wehrmacht, and other administrators of the Final Solution, as well as tens of thousands of German farmers who had been avid employers of the slaves conscripted from the local Slavic populations.

The League of Expelled Germans plays fast and loose with history in other ways as well. The very name of its proposed memorial institution, the Center Against Expulsions, suggests a more encompassing mandate than the League actually embraces. Ethnic Germans were, after all, hardly the only people undergoing expulsion in the postwar period: a quarter of Poland's population was forced to evacuate territory that had been incorporated into the USSR by Stalin. Nor, for that matter, did expulsions begin in 1945. The first and most relevant case had its origins in 1933, when Germany's Jews were stripped of their citizenship, their property, and their very status as human beings, later to be driven from their homes, collected in ghettos, and sent to their deaths. The few who survived and attempted to return after the war found their homes and their belongings appropriated by strangers.

Some of the materials produced in conjunction with the proposed Center Against Expulsions commit other offenses against historical truth. Thus, the collection points where many Germans were sent after the war to be screened for participation in war crimes are referred to, scandalously, as "extermination camps." The proposed Center's website features a purportedly complete accounting of all the expulsions that took place in Europe over the last century. Here we learn misleadingly that while Germans suffered fifteen major expulsions, involving over 15 million people, Jews underwent but three. As for the actual number of Jews driven out of their homes between 1939 and 1945, the website is unspecific to a fault: in place of a number, there is only a question mark. Another question mark greets the visitor curious about the number of Jews murdered by the Germans. Are we to think the number is beyond counting? Or, perhaps, that it is anybody's guess?

Erika Steinbach, the League's leader, is herself a study in evasion. Though she is skilled at telling heartrending tales about how the children of expellees, just like the children of Holocaust survivors, continue to experience their parents' pain, some of the tales she recounts, including her own, are highly dubious. Though Steinbach does indeed come from the east, and was born in Poland in 1943, just as she claims, her family arrived in Nazi-occupied Poland from western Germany *after* the area had been annexed by the Nazis in 1939, and her father was a German soldier. Only after Germany lost the war was the family forced to leave. If Germans are to commemorate the suffering of Erika Steinbach's family, then why should they not be invited to commemorate the suffering of Wehrmacht troops stationed in Paris, in Rome, and on the outskirts of Moscow? In short, Steinbach's story is not about German victimization; rather, it belongs under the rubric of Nazi rehabilitation.

ALREADY, ACCORDING to a recent opinion poll, more than a third of Germans believe that their countrymen were victims of World War II just like the Jews. This number is likely to grow. "Nobody in Germany is allowed to tell the truth any more," say the defenders of Martin Hohmann. They are partly right, but in ways they do not intend. In the name of historical remembrance and truth, Germans are being fed a diet of forgetfulness and lies.

At stake in this falsification of the past is not just the genuine achievement of Germany in facing and makings amends for its terrible past. At stake, as well, is the place Germany occupies in Europe and the world. Is it to be a normal country at last? Or, as a state-sponsored Center Against Expulsions would succeed in demonstrating, is it destined to remain a very different kind of nation, with a very special and still unmastered past?

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OBSERVATIONS

Patrick O'Brian's Excellent Adventure

Michael J. Lewis

BEFORE TELEVISION put an end to Hollywood's golden age, the historical costume drama was as much a staple of the industry as the detective story, the romantic comedy, and the musical. Every major studio had its array of permanent sets: the crusader castle, the street of the Old West, the ballroom that might be in Versailles or Vienna or St. Petersburg. The résumés of the actors of the 1930's included roles that their modern counterparts will never see: Louis Pasteur, Benito Juarez, Gainsborough, Disraeli, even Mrs. O'Leary (she of the cow and the Chicago fire.)

Over time, the history film, like the study of history itself, fell from favor. Although the odd epic, like *Lawrence of Arabia,* might be made for prestige value, the genre had all but vanished by the second half of the 1970's. But the hiatus turned out to be temporary. In recent years Hollywood has rediscovered history, and in a big way. Popular films have been set in such diverse localities as ancient Rome, Elizabethan England, and antebellum Manhattan, with the roster of crowd-pleasing, Academy Award winners including *Braveheart* (1995), *Titanic* (1997), and *Gladiator* (2000). They have now been joined by *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World,* directed by Peter Weir.

Like those other recent epics, *Master and Commander* is a rousing adventure tale. Unlike them, it is based on a series of historical novels—perhaps the most successful, the most scrupulously researched, and the most highly literate of the past generation. This is the Aubrey-Maturin series (1970-1999) by the late Patrick O'Brian, whose twenty volumes detail the exploits of Jack Aubrey, an intrepid English sea captain, and Stephen Maturin, his half-Irish, half-Catalan surgeon. Over the course of the series, which is set during the Napoleonic wars, these two friends visit most of the waters where the English navy fought, battling French, Spanish, American, and Arab foes in exotic locales from the Red Sea to the icy fringes of Antarctica. As novelistic terrain goes, this was hardly unexplored—it is best known from C. S. Forester's *Horatio Hornblower* series—but O'Brian produced something of much higher literary merit: a kind of episodic, seaborne *War and Peace* of worldwide scope.

The movie *Master and Commander* marries (rather unhappily) the first and tenth titles of the series. It is the account of a 12,000-mile chase as Aubrey doggedly tracks a French frigate down the Atlantic coast of South America and up the other side as far as the Galapagos Islands, where it has been sent to harass the English whaling fleet. In the original book, the action takes place during the War of 1812 and the raiding vessel is American; in the Frenchification of the enemy vessel (and the shift back to 1805), we see right away what happens when box-office considerations—in this case, the presumed expectations of an American audience—collide with those of historical fidelity.

THERE IS hardly anything new in *that,* of course. When it comes to history, the costume dramas of Hol-

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lywood's golden age seldom rose above a certain perfunctory level. Entertainment usually trumped pedantry and research, and audiences were blithely fed not the reality of young Lincoln or Custer but the myth. In our own, debunking age, the impulse to mythologize has gone by the boards, but without any increase in historical accuracy. As shown by the recent *Jefferson in Paris* (1995), in which Nick Nolte grotesquely impersonates the third President, today's scriptwriter is more likely to see himself as a crusading investigative reporter than as a hagiographer; what remains consistently high is the level of distortion.

On the other hand, the quality of Hollywood's research has become superlative, with the generic period décor of the past giving way to a punctilious historicism. Meticulous accuracy in costume, hairstyles, and props, vetted by large staffs of specialized consultants, is now the rule. The most celebrated practitioners of this approach have been the Merchant-Ivory team (of *Remains of the Day* fame, among others), whose cameras seem to be operated by remote control from Sotheby's, scanning the décor with self-satisfied curatorial approval. In other recent films, such as *Gangs of New York* or the shockingly bad *Pearl Harbor*, the research into material surfaces has been equally exhibitionistic, even fetishistic.

It is, however, the differences in social mores, in basic assumptions and attitudes, that comprise the essential strangeness of the past, not differences in mere objects or haircuts. While Hollywood is now far better than before at manufacturing plausible historical tableaux, it is no better at causing the figures in these tableaux to speak, move, or act convincingly. In many cases, it is worse. Thus, while the makers of *Titanic* re-created the great ship down to its carpets and china, they were unable to see that a gentlewoman of 1912, even in extremis, would not have performed the gesture commonly known as "giving the finger," nor would she have been familiar with it. Consultants everywhere, evidently, but none for etiquette.

TRANSLATING NOVELS to the screen offers special difficulties of its own. Many a literate and well-plotted novel has been shipwrecked, as it were, in the process of becoming a movie, and fans of O'Brian's novels had long suspected that they would be more or less unfilmable—not because they lack action but because the action is only an aspect of a much more complex literary whole.

As O'Brian was well aware, ocean sailing in the Regency period was in large measure an exercise in tedium; the convulsive violence of the typhoon, or the battle, was the exception rather than the rule. Battles themselves were for the most part waiting games, their warm-ups highly abstract positional affairs with all the excitement of a slow-moving chess match on a board twenty miles square, and the actual fighting consisting of a slow mutual pulverizing of hulls, broadside by broadside, perhaps followed by a brief melee on deck. In O'Brian, swashbuckling takes up scarcely two or three pages of each book.

O'Brian's achievement was, in fact, to devise a literary form suited to this peculiar form of warfare. Rather than foreshortening the interludes between battles, as Forester did, he made the most of them. They are the blank canvas that he fills with the vagaries of the Aubrey-Maturin friendship and the tumultuous love life of each man. In short, he transplanted the Jane Austen comedy of manners, or domestic drama, onto the high seas, following her familiar subjects—thwarted romance, family ambition, and social intrigue—but from the male point of view. The invariable convergence of his twin narrative lines, the naval and the social, is what gives these books their extraordinary sense of propulsion.

At bottom, however, the novels are really the story of a friendship. Aubrey and Maturin—the blustery, phlegmatic sea captain and his bookish, secretive surgeon—are mirror images, opposites in every way. Aubrey is a tall blond, tending to corpulence, hearty in his appetites but generous by temperament. Although a fierce and wily warrior, he is simple-hearted and gullible, especially on land, where he is the regular prey of hustlers and "land sharks."

Maturin, by contrast, has sallow, "ill-favored" looks, thinning hair, and a harsh, grating laugh. He is famously hopeless at sea, sailing only to satisfy his urge to collect natural-history specimens and to discover new species. Burdened by his illegitimate birth, he is often haughty and quick to take offense; considerable practice has made him a lethal duelist. Unlike the staunchly Tory Aubrey, Maturin is a supporter of Irish independence, a foe of slavery, and a believing Catholic. Were it not for their shared love of music and hatred of Napoleon, the two could easily have been enemies.

This intimate and volatile friendship, set in confined quarters against the dramatic backdrop of a perilous sea chase, offers great cinematic potential. An especially valuable asset is O'Brian's startlingly good dialogue. This is not an all-purpose, generalized Regency speech but the era's living language itself, wielded deftly across the entire social scale, from the palace yard to the barnyard. O'Brian's conversations are often hilarious (although the humor is delivered so archly that a casual reader may miss much of it), and his characters speak with the fluid, urgent immediacy that we otherwise know only from Samuel Johnson's dinner talk.

The verisimilitude of O'Brian's language can be only partially explained by his archival sleuthing in letters, ships' logs, admiralty records, and court-martial proceedings (one of the few sources where sail-

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ors' profanity was quoted verbatim). It is due at least as much to the linguistic isolation of O'Brian himself. An expatriate Briton who lived in southern France from 1949 to his death in 2000, he clearly did not experience the incremental, invisible changes that the English language underwent over the past half-century—which may also help explain the essential undatability of his books.

O'Brian's life seems to illuminate another aspect of the series as well: the marvelous obliqueness of his conversations. Characters engage one another elliptically, advancing by innuendo and indirection, and the reader often has the sense of having been at a dinner party where the most urgent things were left hanging in the air, unsaid. This was certainly the case with O'Brian, whose secretiveness was legendary. Not until his death was it revealed that he was not Irish, as he gave out, but the son of a German-born doctor who lived in London. Nor had he served as a naval intelligence officer in World War II, but as an ambulance driver. Even his name was an invention, concocted after he abandoned his first wife and sick child and moved to Wales where he reinvented himself as an Irishman.

IT IS easy to see why the challenge of rendering O'Brian on film would have attracted Peter Weir. Since the beginning of his career, the Australian director has been drawn to stories of intense experience where the focus is not so much on the action or violence as on the effect these have on decent and ordinary men. This was true of his ominous and brooding *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and of subsequent films like *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983), and *Witness* (1985).

In *Master and Commander* Weir has found a cinematic style appropriate to O'Brian's expansive cadences, muscular but controlled pacing, and kinetic feel for the life of a moving ship. The thrilling visual realization of O'Brian's descriptions compensates in large measure for the loss of his authorial voice. The casting is also generally first-rate, especially the selection of the Australian ruffian Russell Crowe, his hair dyed blond and pig-tailed, in the part of Aubrey. Crowe's performance exquisitely captures the two lobes of the captain's personality: savage intensity on the cannon-raked quarterdeck and infectious good cheer at all other times. He is particularly good at Aubrey's rather ponderous wit, his laborious set-up of a cumbersome pun and winning merriment at the results.

Less happy is the role of Maturin, the film's only overt example of dumbing-down. This turbulent and somewhat terrifying Catalan-Irishman of bastard birth has been transformed into an overly earnest and absent-minded scientist. It was to be expected that Maturin's comic slovenliness—the marmalade-stained powdered wig and the habitual three-days' growth of beard—would be tidied up by fastidious Hollywood, but in the process a rich literary creation has been reduced to something of a stock figure. There is in the movie none of the torment of the laudanum-addicted Maturin, at war with his demons and snarling "*vade retro, Satanas*" at himself when he burns with unwanted carnal desire. So far as performance goes, Paul Bettany is engaging and likeable, but he represents the film's great missed opportunity.

But Weir has an undeniable gift for showing the effects of extreme tension, and this stands him in good stead in the film's several naval battles. He brings us up against the cruel nature of conflict by broadside, which did not kill directly but rather through the great spray of splinters and slivers that shot out from the shattering of a ship's oak planks by cannonball. This was the cause of the wooden legs, hooks,

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and eye patches so beloved of the swashbuckling genre.

Weir's crisp, factual account does for the conventional nautical yarn (*à la* Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks) just what Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* did for the World War II movie. It replaces the elegantly bloodless action of the past with the unsparing forensic violence of contemporary Hollywood. But it does so with greater fundamental decency: there is none of the wallowing in gore and spilled guts that disfigured Spielberg's film. Even during a grisly amputation, performed on a mere boy of a midshipman, the appalling nature of the event is made clear without any taint of macabre voyeurism.

Finally, unlike the curatorial approach of the Merchant-Ivory films, *Master and Commander* manages to get the human elements right: the social relationships, the etiquettes and courtesies, the standard conventions of the era and the idiosyncratic way that different characters observe them. All this is as faithful to historical reality as the uniforms, the rigging, the weapons, and the weevil-infested food. The film even gets the body language right—something that is notoriously difficult to judge correctly but that nonetheless can be gleaned from the indirect evidence of contemporary drawings, paintings, etiquette manuals, and so forth.

Which is not to say that (putting the failure with Maturin aside) the movie is perfect. It flattens the subtlety and ironic understatement of O'Brian's wordplay, pushing to the surface things veiled and indeterminate. And, regrettably, it is entirely a shipboard story, playing itself out among old shipmates. The closed and stable world of Aubrey's crew does not bring out the curious mixture of inhibition, swagger, suspicion, and obliviousness in a social gathering characterized by the friction between strangers and new acquaintances; O'Brian loves to detail such situations, where he is at his very best.

Master and Commander performed moderately well upon its release, and virtually every critic of note gave it a rave review. Certainly it stands head and shoulders above most recent Hollywood forays into history, most of which are nothing more than hi-tech, high-budget Bulwer-Lytton. But it has not been a blockbuster, and it is unlikely to garner the repeat business that is essential to big box-office numbers.

This may have to do with matters that lie outside the film's unquestioned excellence of script, performance, and visualization. For one thing, it may have to do with its refusal to satisfy our inveterate expectation of a moral—a lesson—in which the truth of what we have witnessed is encapsulated for us once and for all. If Steven Spielberg had made this film, he would assuredly have subordinated the churning action to a fable of personal redemption, just as he did with *Saving Private Ryan*. The story of *Master and Commander*, while exciting in and of itself, is resolutely, adamantly, unconnected with any higher moral truth.

Another temptation faced—and faced down—by Weir was to make *Master and Commander* into a thinly veiled allegory of modern global politics. Indeed, a few critics complained about just this failure on his part to "excavate cultural fears and political conflicts" (in the words of one such critic, whose choice of words also managed to signal the precise *kind* of allegory he was looking for). But we know what happens when Hollywood turns its lens into a petri dish. A typical example is *Jefferson in Paris*, whose subject matter—the romantic relationship between the Virginian and Sally Hemmings, his dead wife's half-sister who was also a household slave—became an excuse for a ludicrously unpersuasive fable of racial politics. Even more tendentious was Spielberg's *Amistad* (1998), which succeeded in getting every historical detail right, down to the West African dialect spoken by the captives on that Spanish slave ship, while utterly falsifying the role of the white Protestant abolitionists who worked for the slaves' freedom.

Compared with these sorts of retroactive affirmative action, Weir's tinkerings are mild indeed. *Master and Commander* works so well because it is *not* preachy or didactic or reductive, and because it does not try to enlist the past in the service of a polemical point for the present. If it has not been a huge popular success, that may be because its virtues rub up against each other in complex and possibly bewildering ways—its highly cerebral wit against its highly simple ideas of duty, honor, and obedience, its intricate civility against its brute manliness, and so forth. But like O'Brian's indescribable books, it will surely continue to entertain viewers for generations to come, and that is success enough.

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MUSIC

Opera, Grand and Grandiose

Terry Teachout

CASUAL OBSERVERS of American opera companies might be forgiven for assuming that their repertoire is as fixed as the Pentateuch. But the fact is that, just as the Supreme Court is said to follow the election returns, so do opera houses, in between performances of *Carmen* and *La Bohème*, take careful note of the changing tastes of ticket-buying patrons. The 20th century, for example, saw such once-infrequently staged operas as Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Verdi's *Macbeth* become genuinely popular. More recently, the operas of Handel, which had fallen completely out of the repertoire, have been taken up with a vengeance, and it even begins to look as though Russian opera, long a closed book in the West, may soon have its day.

At the same time, at least as many operas fell by the wayside as were successfully revived in the 20th century, some of which, like Gounod's *Faust*, were once staple items of every self-respecting company. But of all the shifts in operatic taste brought about by modernity, the most drastic has been the near-total eclipse of French grand opéra and its leading practitioners, Giacomo Meyerbeer foremost among them. Such five-act historical pageants as Auber's *La muette de Portici* (1828), Rossini's *Guilliaume Tell* (1829), and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), *Le prophète* (1849), and *L'Africaine* (1865), with their thunderous choruses, spectacular arias, compulsory ballets, and black-and-white dramaturgy, once drew crowds to the Paris Opera and other houses around the world. Now they are widely dismissed as theatrical dinosaurs, revived today only as one-time novelties or as showcases for some much-admired singer.

THE FATE of Fromental Halévy's *La Juive* ("The Jewess") is a case in point. Premiered in 1835, this morality play about the dire consequences of religious intolerance was at one time both successful and critically acclaimed, though its popularity was no doubt due in large part to the libretto by the French playwright Eugène Scribe, a virtuoso melodramatist who had already collaborated with Meyerbeer on *Robert le Diable* (1831). Nineteenth-century opera-goers were fascinated by the twists and turns of the complicated tale of Eléazar, a 15th-century Jewish goldsmith whose daughter Rachel becomes involved with Léopold, a Gentile prince who disguises himself as a Jew in order to win her love. Surely they also found the onstage seder led by Eléazar in the second act to be properly exotic, and were thrilled by the tragic (if predictable) denouement.

Yet there was more to *La Juive* than its conventionally "effective" libretto. Halévy's score was admired, for instance, by Richard Wagner, whose anti-Semitism did not stop him from wholeheartedly commending the opera to other German composers; and Gustav Mahler, a Jewish convert to Catholicism who conducted *La Juive* in Vienna, called it "one of the greatest operas ever created." Enrico Caruso sang Eléazar at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1920, and with his

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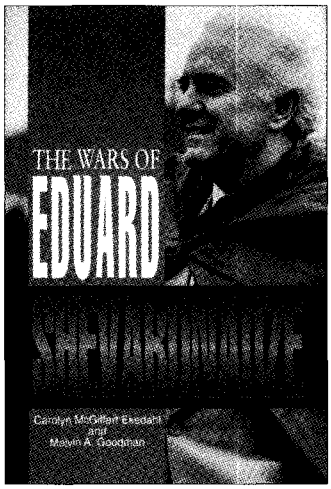

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death the role passed to Giovanni Martinelli, who performed it until 1936.[1]

Thereafter, *La Juive* was dropped from the Met's repertoire, while the fact that it was an opera on a Jewish subject by a Jewish composer had already made it unperformable in German-speaking countries. By then, French grand opéra was increasingly passé, and even after World War II, *La Juive* went unrevived by major houses. Richard Tucker, a Brooklyn cantor turned opera singer who became one of the best-known tenors of the postwar era, performed it on stage in New Orleans and in concert in London, but plans for a Met revival were scuttled by his sudden death in 1975.[2]

Not only did Tucker's death close the door on a possible Met production of *La Juive*, but for many years it appeared to mark the last chapter in the history of a once-popular opera. As recently as 1992, Hugh Macdonald, who wrote the article on Halévy in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, declared his talents to be "not sufficient to ensure immortality, and even *La Juive*, though it appears in the record catalogues, has now vanished from the stage."

Now *La Juive* is back. In 1999, the Vienna State Opera and the New Israeli Opera jointly revived it in a modernized staging directed by Günter Krämer and designed by Gottfried Pilz. This past November, the Metropolitan Opera mounted the same production as a vehicle for the American tenor Neil Shicoff, who had previously sung Eléazar in Vienna. And the American musicologist Diana R. Hallman has published *Opera, Liberalism, and Anti-Semitism in Nineteenth-Century France: The Politics of Halévy's "La Juive,"*[3] a monograph that puts the opera and its reception in historical perspective; she also supplied a program essay for the Met's *La Juive*.

Under Joseph Volpe, the company's general manager, the Met has compiled a history of presenting coarsely trendy stagings of non-standard operas, and its borrowed *La Juive* was no exception to this unfortunate rule. Anthony Tommasini, writing in the *New York Times*, rightly dismissed it as "a modern-dress, unit-set, muddle-headed affair laden with symbolism and at times just plain silly." But the opera itself was handsomely sung, especially by Shicoff (who, like Richard Tucker, is Jewish, the Brooklyn-born son of a cantor). Moreover, and more significantly, the Met's notoriously conservative audience—at least at the performance I saw—appears to have derived considerable pleasure from *La Juive* in spite of the gross defects of the production.

Is *La Juive* more than a period piece? And might its apparent success at the Metropolitan have been a sign of the possible return of French grand opéra to the international major-house repertoire? To the first of these questions, the answer—somewhat to my surprise—is a qualified yes. Though not distinguished, Halévy's music is at all times craftsmanlike and evocative, moving from tableau to tableau with smooth assurance and shrewd pacing. Even at its most grandiose, the scoring is never ponderous, thanks to the typically French lightness of Halévy's wind-dominated orchestral palette. As a result, *La Juive* feels

[1] Caruso's 1920 recording of "Rachel, quand du Seigneur," Eléazar's principal aria, has been reissued countless times, most recently as part of *Caruso 2000*, a CD of Caruso 78's accompanied by a digitally recorded symphony orchestra (RCA 74321-69766-2). It can be heard in its original, unmodified form on *The Caruso Edition, Vol. 4*, pristinely transferred by Ward Marston (Pearl EVC IV, three CD's).

[2] Tucker's heavily cut 1973 London performance was recorded and has been released on CD (Opera D'Oro ODO-1333, two CD's).

[3] Cambridge University Press, 390 pp., $70.00. Neil Shicoff's Eléazar can be heard in a live radio broadcast of the Vienna State Opera production of *La Juive* that was released on CD last year (RCA Red Seal 74321-79596-2, three CD's).

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shorter than its four hours (whereas a German opera written on a similar scale would have seemed far longer).

Repeated listenings, however, reveal that Halévy's music, for all its surface appeal, is almost entirely unmemorable. Its superficiality is characteristic of most 19th-century French music, in which charm is made to substitute for genuine expressivity. As with Meyerbeer, one comes away with the impression that Halévy has filled his dramatic tableaux with written-to-order music, in much the same way that an interior decorator might purchase well-bound books by the foot to comprise a good-looking shelf. (It is no coincidence that the one French grand opéra with a first-rate score and libretto, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, has never been popular in France.)

This superficiality extends to Halévy's treatment of what one might call the "Jewish question." A nonpracticing, fully assimilated Jew, he portrayed the Judaism of his characters in a largely external way, settling for the stock caricatures of Scribe's libretto rather than insisting on more nuanced characterizations. Interestingly, Halévy himself described Eléazar as a "fanatic," and it is the portrayal of this character's vengeful fanaticism (he refuses to renounce his faith in order to save his daughter's life) that many modern viewers perceive as no less anti-Semitic in its implications than the state-sanctioned persecution of Eléazar and Rachel at the hands of Cardinal Brogni, the anguished cleric who becomes Eléazar's reluctant nemesis.

Paradoxically, it is the musical superficiality of *La Juive*—though not Halévy's simple-minded treatment of its Jewish subject matter—that may help to explain why a once-dead opera now appears to be on the verge of reentering the repertoire. Merely to listen to a recording of a work like *La Juive* is to miss its point. Such operas, after all, became popular not because of the merits of their music but because of their cunningly calculated effectiveness as stage spectacles. One might say that they must be seen to be believed.

In this respect, these works can be most usefully compared not with the later "music dramas" of Verdi and Wagner but with such modern-day cinematic costume dramas as *Titanic*, whose glamorously coiffed actors, expensive special effects, and comic-book scripts (not to mention their saccharine musical scores) are strikingly reminiscent of French grand opéra at its most overblown. When Auber incorporated the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius into *La muette de Portici*, he was appealing to the same sort of taste that film directors now satisfy by using the latest digital technology to blow up the White House on screen.

Grand opera did not vanish from the world's stages because audiences outgrew their primal longing for the spectacular. Rather, it fell out of fashion when two composers of genius, Verdi and Wagner, learned how to satisfy that longing in a different way. To be sure, both men were deeply influenced by the techniques of French grand opéra. (Indeed, both wrote works for the Paris Opera, Verdi's *Les vêpres siciliennes* and *Don Carlos* and Wagner's 1861 revision of *Tannhäuser*.) But for all their unrivaled ability to make the grandest possible theatrical gestures, they were far more interested in manifesting the complexity of human motivation by means of music of a more intense emotional grandeur than anything heard in *La Juive*. It is possible, even appropriate, to stage works like *Aida* or *Tristan und Isolde* in something not unlike the manner of grand opera; but their colossal impact arises not from the presence or absence of elephants or sailing ships but from the power of their music. Next to such masterpieces, even the best efforts of Halévy and Meyerbeer seemed trivial by comparison.

The history of opera after Verdi and Wagner—of, in a word, modern opera—has been a chronicle of fitful progress toward dramatic plausibility. But too many 20th-century composers and directors lacked the largeness of emotional gesture that gave the greatest 19th-century operas their characteristic quality. For every Britten or Janáček, a dozen lesser lights have failed to understand that opera is a large-scale art form whose practitioners must of necessity paint in primary colors. Unmelodic scores, undramatic libretti, and over-intellectualized productions have left audiences convinced that "modern" is a euphemism for "boring" (or, worse yet, "ugly").

In fact, opera has always been a popular art form in the best sense of the word, and French grand opéra is nothing if not popular—if not necessarily in the same sense. But grand operas are also, by definition, expensive to produce, and their elaborate scenic requirements mean that they cannot be staged simply without looking cheap, thus putting them beyond the means of all but the biggest and richest opera houses. In addition, they are too long to suit the shorter attention spans of today's audiences (though they can easily be cut without diminishing their effectiveness).

Nevertheless, I expect we will be seeing many more grand-opera revivals in the future. For as opera companies seek to broaden their popular appeal, it seems a safe bet that they will sooner or later try speaking to younger viewers in a language those viewers understand—the universal vulgate of quasi-cinematic spectacle. No opera composers, past or present, have spoken that language more fluently than the canny craftsmen who put the accent in French grand opéra.

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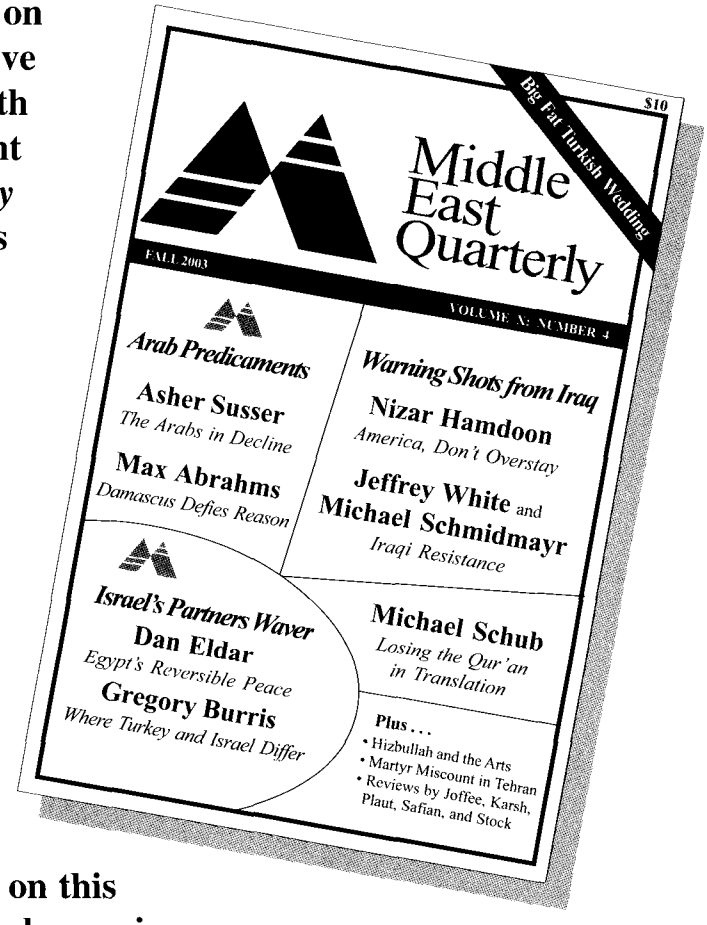

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Books in Review

A Grand Tour

Art: A New History
by Paul Johnson
HarperCollins. 777 pp. $39.95

Reviewed by
David Gelernter

Paul Johnson's *Art: A New History* is not so much a book as a sparring partner. It is a chronological, comprehensive narrative, brilliant and cranky by turns. Brilliance predominates, but if you intend to read Johnson seriously (as he must be read), bring boxing gloves.

Johnson's *History* is extraordinary in part because his eye is sharp, his prose is dangerous to opponents, and his book is formidable in every way—starting with the fact that it weighs a ton. More important, Johnson is no mere professional art-writer. He is a wide-ranging, deep-digging thinker and scholar whose books on history, religion, and culture are classics in their own time. Johnson disdains the ever-tinier subfields bequeathed by thesis advisers to their academic offspring. (A typical academic specialty today is barely wide enough to turn around in.) He disdains politicized, "postmodern" scholarship. He understands art's place on the map of human thought, its historical and intellectual context. And Johnson writes about art from the best possible vantage point: he is a painter himself.

The *History* is chronological, but not inflexibly so. There is, for example, no single "Italian Renaissance" chapter. Instead we get a chapter on cultural roots of the Renaissance and Renaissance architecture, then a chapter on Renaissance sculpture, then one on painting, and finally "The Roman Climax and Its Confused Aftermath," which covers Italian High Renaissance painting, mannerism, and some northern European painters. This arrangement allows Johnson to follow the development of sculpture (say) without darting constantly into nearby fields. But it also forces Michelangelo's architecture, sculpture, and painting into three different, noncontiguous chapters. There is no perfect solution to this problem; Johnson's solution works well for Johnson—it lets him convey (for example) very different impressions of Michelangelo the architect versus Michelangelo the painter—and on the whole the narrative reads smoothly.

Illustrations are central to an art book's mission. The *History*'s are variable in quality but good overall. Vermeer's *Little Street* comes out like a patchy watercolor, but Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*—the Olympic decathlon of color reproduction—is crisp and vivid, from its ultramarine sky to its smoky-orange leopard. It's a shame that Johnson singles out in the text many artworks that go un-illustrated although there are miles of sad, wide, empty margin.

The *History* has no single organizing thesis but several implicit themes: architecture as the defining and "weightiest" art; the glories of British art; religious faith as the atmo-

David Gelernter, *who teaches computer science at Yale and contributes frequently to* Commentary, *is a painter and a member of the National Council of the Arts.*

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sphere in which art lives and breathes. Each of these three is unusual in a survey of art history, and Johnson is especially well-suited to expound them all. The three together, gracefully interlacing, give this book its distinctive and memorable tone.

Architecture is clearly Johnson's favorite art, and the chapters on architecture are the best in the *History*. A series of small Byzantine churches "need to be seen," he writes, "and their rich coloring enjoyed, under a hot sun; indeed their warmth should be felt by hand and the smell of their baked tile and brick eagerly sniffed up." Only a man who loves and knows architecture deeply, not just with his intellect but with his whole body, could have written that sentence. Johnson speaks wonderfully about color in architecture—for example in discussing French cathedrals or the Taj Mahal, or praising Michelangelo's Laurentian-library staircase for "brilliantly combining marbles of different color and radiance." It takes an unusual eye to praise a shades-of-gray composition for radiance and color. It takes a fascinatingly perverse eye to praise this particular staircase at all; it has stumped many a critic and connoisseur over the centuries. "No work I have ever examined," writes Johnson stoutly, "demonstrates more clearly the difference between great architecture and routine competence."

In Johnson's book, British art is usually (albeit subtly) the center of the story; his incandescent pride in British accomplishment lights the whole landscape. There is a superb discussion of William Blake. The overlooked genius of Augustus Pugin gets due recognition—Pugin who collaborated with Charles Barry on the Houses of Parliament, one of history's most important buildings and "the ultimate masterpiece of the Gothic revival." The best part of the long discussion of Turner is a list of the painter's faults: "his appalling figure drawing and vacuous faces . . . his refusal to paint trees properly . . . his overuse of white and yellow when the frenzy took hold." Johnson loves Turner. The list is a triumph of Johnsonian integrity.

You cannot write effectively about art unless you understand religion; Johnson understands. Writing about Byzantine icons, he explains the "state of continuous creation" that yields intermingled religious and aesthetic values: painters start the process but ongoing devotion carries it forward. The "drippings of wax, the oleaginous layers created over centuries by oil lamps set in front of the image" become part of it, mellowing and deepening and changing it. After a discussion of the complex history of St. Peter's in Rome—a discussion taking in Bramante and Sangallo, Raphael and Michelangelo—Johnson asks: "So who built St. Peter's?" His answer: "God and time."

(If the *History* is brilliant on religion, it is sometimes clumsy on sexuality. How could anyone fail to register the erotic intensity of Corregio's *Io*, especially given Io's moody resemblance to Bernini's *Saint Teresa*, about whom Johnson is loud and clear? And how could a respectable history of art dismiss Modigliani, the greatest master of the erotic nude in the last hundred years, without a single illustration?)

In English cathedrals, the *History*'s three big themes come together like a choir, and the results are lovely and close to perfect. Here is Johnson on Lincoln, a "grand church":

> The cathedral, nave and choir together, presents a vast tunnel, twenty bays long, with the spiky shape of the organ silhouetted against the far-distant, but enormous, east window. When the sun is rising in the east, this is one of the overwhelming shockviews of European architecture.

(Unfortunately you will have to consult Johnson's *British Cathedrals* of 1980 if you want to see a picture—and after that final sentence, how could you not want to?) Reaching the lantern over the crossing at Ely, he makes us feel that we have arrived at the pinnacle of art:

> We move up the long, twelve-bay nave, which is narrow and therefore seems high, and pass under the great end-of-nave arch into infinite space.

Such experiences are the point of art, and such sentences are the point of art-writing.

THERE IS another, implicit theme in this book that occasionally compromises it. That Johnson should be unimpressed by contemporary academic art historians is only fair. Some are too specialized to see the point, some are corrupted by politics, many are blown around shamelessly by the winds of fashion. Johnson's *History* is brilliant when he is skillfully hacking away at the poisonous vines that clutch at art's tall trees; it is cranky when he makes too free with the machete and prunes away masterpieces, too. The problem is especially conspicuous when he declines to justify a strange or questionable judgment but allows us to guess (like a cat burglar leaving a monogrammed handkerchief behind) that he is *anti* because the profs are *pro*.

It is hard to swallow, for instance, his calling classic Greek vase painting "a little meretricious, even vulgar" when he fails to include even one illustration of the work of the (5th-century B.C.E.) Berlin Painter—one of history's great draftsmen, whose art has the wit, the restraint, and the mint-cool elegance of Ingres. It is strange that the only illustration of Greek vase painting is black-figure and not red-figure, when Johnson himself has pointed out that red-figure painting "allowed for much greater fluidity and freedom of expression." You might almost conclude that Johnson has a personal grudge against Greek painting. You

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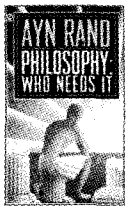

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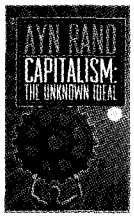

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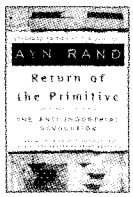

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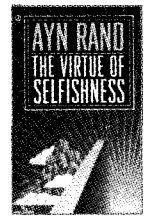

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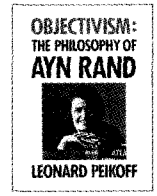

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By Onkar Ghate (June 2, 2003)

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might almost be right: at the end of the section we learn that "it is the modern academics who have made Greek pottery an art form" (a judgment John Keats, for one, might have rejected).

Or consider Michelangelo. Johnson's discussion of the staircase for the Laurentian library is brilliant, and he does well not to be bluffed into the back alley where the academics come and go, talking of homosexuality and Michelangelo. (Yet we eagerly await the day when some brave soul makes a career by pointing out that the two operative sexes in the art world are not male and female but heterosexual male and homosexual male.) But does he really mean that Michelangelo's *Pietà* in the Vatican is "the best work of his life"? Surely it is less great (for all its uncanny virtuosity, its remote, slippery perfection) than (for example) the infinitely far-seeing Medici *Madonna*. Once again it is hard not to suspect that Johnson is twitting academics who delight in demoting and dispraising the Vatican *Pietà* because mere people love it.

And what about the cleansed and resurrected frescoes in the Sistine Chapel? Do they really "show little attempt to portray character or individuality," *do* they lack all "arresting detail or subtlety in tone, color, or light"? (Restoration of the Sistine ceiling was completed in 1989, of the *Last Judgment* on the altar wall in 1994.) Could Johnson and I be looking at the same thunderstruck, desperately astonished Jonah—the cool verdigris of his tunic shading into pale lavender against coppery skin? At the same painfully sunk-into-himself Jeremiah, the warm orangey-yellows and gray-roses of his robe set off by crisp gray-green edging? These masterpieces, together with the *Last Judgment*'s cleaned and reborn colors, threw me for a loop when I first saw them almost a decade ago; I had thought (as a painter) that I had finished learning about color.

THE LEAST convincing section of the book is the one on modern art, an area where (surprise!) academics are more heavily implicated with their theories and favorites than anywhere else in art history. Here is Johnson on cubism: "No one has ever explained convincingly why it improved painting, if it did." But cubism *has* been well explained, as the inexorable compression of the imaginary space inside the picture, the rear plane moving steadily forward until it crashes into the front and the picture-space becomes flat—whereupon abstraction, or pure design-painting, is born. Whether cubism "improved" painting is hard to say. It *did* give rise to lots of junk, but also (thanks to Picasso, Gris, Duchamp, Jacques Villon, Stuart Davis) to a few stunning masterpieces—same as virtually all other schools of painting. When Johnson calls cubism "the first major instance of fashion art," he is right, and he makes an important point. But when he speaks of the "low degree of skill" that goes with fashion art, he can't be serious. Picasso *not skillful*? A draftsman so prodigious, an eye so acute that even Giacometti (himself merely a brilliant draftsman) was awestruck at his ability to glance at a face and memorize it in one instant forever?

And when Johnson simply omits such artists as Stuart Davis and Joseph Cornell, and passes over Willem de Kooning in a quarter-sentence and no illustrations, what to think? De Kooning was the greatest abstract painter by far, and stands alongside Matisse as one of the two genius colorists of modern times. Joseph Cornell's case is even more puzzling: the finest of modern American sculptors (although his "boxes" are, admittedly, unconventional sculpture), whose representational, intensely atmospheric pieces bring Vermeer and Hopper to mind—and Johnson is all for Vermeer and Hopper.

IN SHORT: Paul Johnson paints with a broad, confident, springy, heavily loaded brush. The effect can be mesmerizing, even Titianeseque; or infuriating. The *History* must be sipped carefully, respectfully, warily. It is a book that demands to be challenged and argued with.

Yet there is no one with whom I would rather argue. "The medieval cathedrals of Europe," says Johnson, "are the greatest accomplishments of humanity in the whole theater of art." That sort of statement is what Paul Johnson is for; what art-history books *ought* to be for. It is not only bolder but truer than the typical heavily-hedged academic pronouncement. No statement loaded with qualifiers can get up enough speed to leap the wide gap between the everyday commonplace and the life-expanding truth. But Johnson leaps that gap all the time, and makes it look easy. He is, after all, the most eminent thinker to write art history in our time.

The Eliminationist

Yasir Arafat:
A Political Biography
by Barry Rubin and
Judith Colp Rubin
Oxford. 354 pp. $27.50

Arafat's War
by Efraim Karsh
Grove. 296 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

YASIR ARAFAT has held the Palestinians in his personal grip for almost five decades—a fact that is itself a monument to the tribal

DAVID PRYCE-JONES, *the British political analyst, is a senior editor of* National Review.

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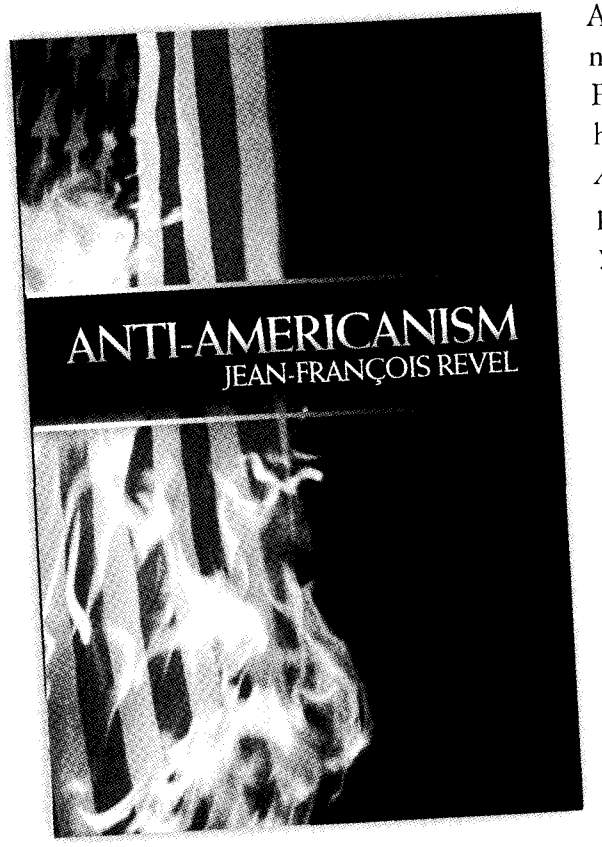
The French Disease



Angered by the increasing hostility against a nation he knows and admires, the distinguished French intellectual Jean-François Revel has come to America's defense in *Anti-Americanism*, a witty and erudite book that paradoxically spent several weeks late last year on top of the French best-seller list.

Author of *How Democracies Perish*, and other books that have had significant influence on both sides of the Atlantic, Revel focuses here on the notion that America is the source of all evil—imperialistic, greedy and ruthlessly competitive, a "cowboy nation" whose riches are acquired at the price of Third World impoverishment.

Here is what Revel says the anti-Americans, especially the French themselves, believe: "American society is entirely ruled by money. No other value, whether familial, moral, religious, civic, cultural, professional, or ethical has any potency in itself. Everything in America is a commodity, regarded and used exclusively for its material value. A person is judged solely by the worth of his bank account. Every U.S. President has been in the pockets of the oil companies, the military-industrial complex, the agricultural lobby, or the financial manipulators of Wall Street. America is the 'jungle' par excellence of out-of-control, 'savage' capitalism, where the rich are always becoming richer and fewer, while the poor are becoming poorer and more numerous. Poverty is the dominant social reality in America. Hordes of famished indigents are everywhere, while luxurious chauffeured limousines with darkened windows glide through the urban wilderness."

Revel shows how these charges ultimately stem from weakness and envy on the part of those who make them, and criticizes the legions of foreign propagandists and pseudo-intellectuals who make a living "bashing America." At a time when it seems that much of the world is marching against America, Revel shows what they are really marching against is freedom.

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and absolute politics of Palestinian society. His declared ambition has been to obtain a state, and so to remedy the historic Arab rejection of the 1947 UN partition plan that is evidently the abiding source of Palestinian misfortune. But what sort of state? Either it must live alongside Israel or it is meant to eradicate Israel. Which is it to be?

At times, and with high drama, Arafat has agreed to compromise—that is, to live alongside Israel—only to resort soon afterward to violence. This pattern of alternating between yes and no has caused mayhem and huge loss of life. The futility of it is also baffling. Is Arafat the helpless victim of cultural conditioning? Or does something in his character prevent him from taking the realistic measure of Israel, of other Arab leaders, and of the whole watching world?

Arafat's background is obscure, so obscure that, even today, salient facts about his life are in doubt. According to one of these new books about him, for instance, he was born the fourth child of a small shopkeeper; according to the other, he was the sixth child of a textile merchant. In upbringing and education, he seems to be more Egyptian than Palestinian, having enrolled early in the extremist Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo. In his past he is supposed to have murdered a fellow student, to have made a fortune in Kuwait, to have participated in military campaigns winning him the rank of general—all of which serves to project an aura of heroism around a man physically small, gawky, and unprepossessing.

In the era in which Arafat was growing up, nationalist movements in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia were filling the political and moral void left by World War II. Nationalist leaders were mobilizing and arming their masses, forcing out the exhausted colonial powers and, virtually without exception, setting up absolute rule in tribal and absolute style. The youthful Arafat might well have concluded that freedom and independence were two very different ideals, and that violence paid in the right circumstances. Taking over the Palestine Liberation Organization (founded in and by Egypt in 1964) after the Six-Day war of 1967, Arafat built a nationalist movement on the usual model of the period.

His undoubted achievement has been to transform the Palestinian plight into a cause. In pursuit of that cause, he has behaved like any other Arab dictator, obedient to the iron law of absolutism whereby unchecked power generates violence and violence in turn generates more unchecked power. He has offered himself as the willing client of every enemy of democracy within reach, from the Soviet Union to Saddam Hussein. In Jordan, and later in Lebanon, he deliberately provoked civil war. The international community, although briefly contriving to place him in political quarantine in Tunis, could never summon up the resolve to call his brand of nationalism by its proper name. The United States and the European democracies, and collective institutions like the UN and the EU, have continually allowed him to avoid responsibility for his actions.

Arafat habitually depicts Israelis either in the familiar Muslim Brotherhood stereotype as people who have no right to be where they are, and so must accept the protected or *dhimmi* status they have had in traditional Islam, or in the nationalist stereotype as imperialists who must go back to their countries of origin. A favorite phrase of his is "the peace of the brave," which on inspection turns out to mean that Israelis must take him on trust and leave their future in his hands. When it comes to anti-Jewish terrorism, Arafat has set standards that other extremists, whether ideological or Islamist, have had to try to match. A chain of murder connects, over the decades, a Swiss aircraft blown up in mid-air en route to Tel Aviv, killing the 47 people on board; the shooting of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games; the massacre of 27 passengers at Lod airport; the machine-gunning of 22 children and five adults in the northern Israeli town of Ma'alot; the throwing overboard from a cruise liner of the American citizen Leon Klinghoffer; and so forth.

Speaking to Arabs, Arafat makes himself clear. "I have no use for Jews. They are and remain Jews," he told a group of Arab diplomats in 1996. On several occasions he has been filmed or taped calling, like any member of the Muslim Brotherhood, for jihad against the Jews. A satirist could hardly have imagined that someone with such a record of rhetorical and physical violence could win the Nobel Peace prize; but, of course, he did.

BARRY RUBIN directs a think tank in Tel Aviv, and his co-author Judith Colp Rubin is a journalist. Efraim Karsh is a professor at King's College, London. Thoughtfully, and with a great deal of up-to-date and scholarly research, both of these books try to make sense of Arafat's political record.

The Rubins' *Yasir Arafat* is a very complete account of serial miscalculations and of the inability or unwillingness to learn from them: "a record of political failure almost unparalleled in history," in the authors' formulation. They ascribe this failure to a combination of character and context. In the belief that violence is an open-ended exploration undertaken for the sake of gain, Arafat prefers to keep the struggle going rather than resolve it. This is revolutionary romanticism, infused with tribalism. He has a nightmare, the Rubins inform us, in which one day a question will be posed to Arab schoolchildren, "Who was Yasir Arafat?," and the correct answer will be: "The man who gave up Palestine to the Jews."

Efraim Karsh argues cogently that

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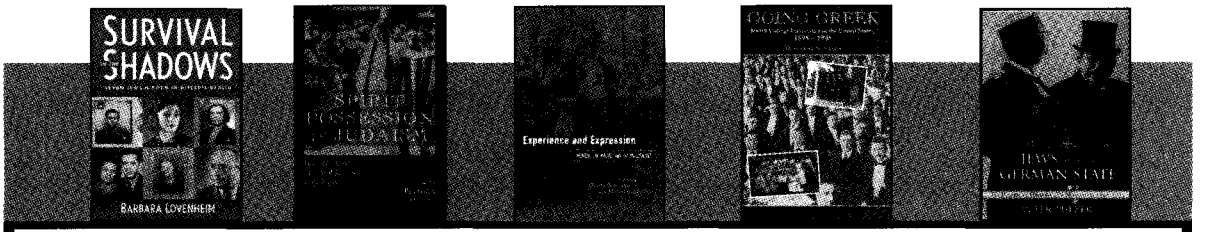

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Arafat's binary yes/no is explicable only as part of a strategy designed to eliminate the state of Israel. Sponsorship of terror, broken promises and lies, fanciful accusations about supposed Israeli use of poison gas or radioactive uranium, are all permissible means of denigrating, demoralizing, and finally destroying the Jews. The black arts that he practices bear comparison with those of another tribal and absolute leader, Saddam Hussein, in his confrontation with UN weapons inspectors over the course of the 1990's.

In Karsh's view, and the Rubins hardly disagree, it was international pressure alone that drove Arafat to pay lip service to the concept of a two-state solution when he signed the Oslo accords in 1993 and ostensibly renounced violence. In reality, the impetus behind his acceptance of Oslo was the disappearance of his Soviet sponsors and the American humbling of Saddam Hussein, which had temporarily closed all other options. The Rubins and Karsh likewise concur that this master of doublespeak was bound to cheat at the first opportunity, in order to advance the single-state solution that alone has been acceptable to him. Thanks to those same Oslo accords, the opportunity came soon enough, as Arafat was brought back from exile in Tunis to bases on the West Bank and in Gaza where he was free to launch again the armed struggle he had just promised to renounce.

The renewal of violence in the 1990's put successive Israeli governments to the test, and prompted President Bill Clinton to set up shop as a latter-day King Solomon. The Camp David summit in 2000 marked the moment at which a sincere Arafat could at last have brought into being the long-delayed Palestinian state. As the detailed and authoritative accounts in both books attest, this was precisely the solution Arafat was never going to accept.

The Rubins have made a special point of interviewing officials involved on all sides of the abortive negotiations at Camp David. Bad-tempered throughout, giving the impression that he was wasting his time, Arafat had evidently made up his mind well beforehand that, since he had gotten as far as he had gotten through violence, the threat of more violence was bound to yield more concessions. At Camp David he attacked the legitimacy of Israel with the claim that Jews had no religious ties to Jerusalem or to the country, and tried to ensure Israel's demographic demise in advance by insisting on an unqualified right of return for Palestinian refugees. When offered a deal of unprecedented generosity, he turned it down and left Camp David without putting forward any counter-proposals of his own. With Arafat, Karsh concludes bluntly, the peace process amounted simply to "a grand deception."

AND NOW? Triggering and encouraging violence with repeated calls for martyrs and mass martyrdom, Arafat has left the Palestinians in a worse plight than the one in which he found them, unable either to resolve the struggle with Israel or to back away from it but, as the Rubins put it, "forever suspended between victory and defeat." Under Israeli occupation, this was a community well off by third-world standards; now, after seven years of Oslo and three years of unremitting terrorism, its economy is almost derelict and its institutions are riddled with corruption. Standard anti-Jewish stereotypes are propagated in the Palestinian educational system and through the media, and thence, as Karsh emphasizes, broadcast outward to the rest of the Arab world. Huge sums from donor countries end up missing or in accounts controlled exclusively by Arafat for purposes of paying the police-and-security apparatus that keeps him in power. When school examinations in the future ask, "Who was Yasir Arafat?," the truthful answer will be: "The man responsible for Palestinian nihilism, and for the promotion of mass hatred of Jews."

Things did not have to turn out so darkly, as these timely books make clear. Arafat is now seventy-four. Sooner rather than later, one of several younger contenders will take his place. The context in which he has operated—the context, that is, of Palestinian society and culture—may have abetted Arafat in his determination never to make peace with Israel; but it did not prevent him from doing so. Character alone will decide whether some successor can overcome the immense damage that is his legacy.

In Flight

The Early Stories, 1953-1975
by John Updike
Knopf. 838 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Thomas L. Jeffers

"THERE WE all are, and there we'll all be forever," sighs a mother overlooking a small Pennsylvania town in the mid-1940's. Pausing, she adds: "Except you, Allen. You're going to fly."

This is how John Updike (born 1932) opens his 1959 story, "Flight"—with a by no means singular indication that the lad from Shillington, PA (always named Olinger in his early fiction) had an ambitious mother as well as a supportive father; that he would go on scholarship to Harvard, where he would graduate summa cum laude in English; and that he would soar to still greater things—a year studying draftsmanship at the Ruskin School at Oxford, another year and a half working on staff at the *New Yorker*, and then, still in his

THOMAS L. JEFFERS *is the editor of* The Norman Podhoretz Reader, *to be published by the Free Press this month.*

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mid-twenties, writing stories for that magazine from his new home in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

So many stories, and in so many *New Yorkers*: "a heedless broad Mississippi of print" that, Updike observes here, "serviced a readership, a certain demographic episode, now passed into history—all those birch-shaded Connecticut mailboxes receiving, week after week, [the editor] William Shawn's notion of entertainment and instruction." That original exurban readership may indeed have passed into history, but Updike himself clearly has not. In this massive new book, the latest in an *oeuvre* that includes no fewer than twenty novels, eleven collections of short fiction, seven big volumes of essays, and six shorter ones of poems, he has now gathered his early tales.

Updike's is a literary career on the scale of such 19th-century American greats as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James. The question is, has it been as valuable? Not quite. And the reason is largely that Updike has never written a novel as masterly, as central to our sense of ourselves as Americans, as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians*, or *The Ambassadors*. He is capable of sketching a Jamesian sort of architecture in, say, *Couples* (1968) or *Toward the End of Time* (1997), but, to use visual terms, he cannot fill in the opposing values, or paint with the broad palette, that make James's plots and characters both socially emblematic and morally profound. Not even the tetralogy of novels centered on the character of "Rabbit" Angstrom, for which he is best known, rises to that level.

In the short-story mode, however, Updike does rival Hawthorne and James. He also consistently equals, and often surpasses, his immediate American precursors—Ernest Hemingway, J. D. Salinger, John O'Hara, John Cheever—all of

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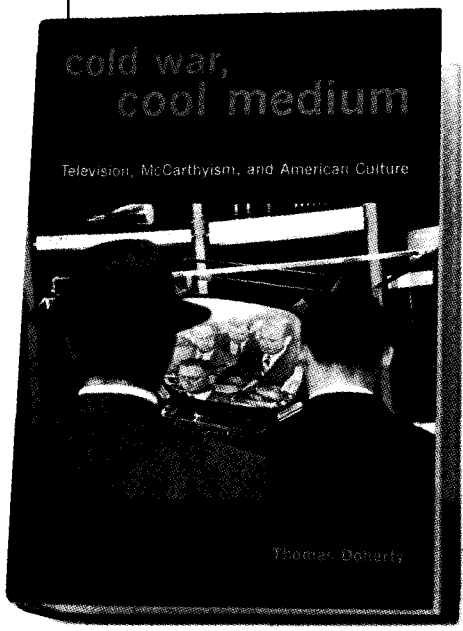

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whom he praises in the foreword to this new book for their spare but revealing dialogue and their restrained placing of unadorned nouns and verbs.

Updike emulated that spare dialogue in his very first story, "Ace in the Hole" (1953), and he has stuck with it ever since. But when it came to nouns and verbs, he showed an early partiality for the elaborate adornments of Hawthorne and James. His best critic, William H. Pritchard, is right that Updike's primary form has remained the sentence, and especially the complex sentence—clauses embedded in clauses, phrases strung along in sequence, the whole piled-up pagoda held together by the tensile strength of precisely placed subject and predicate.

The mind orchestrating these sentences is supremely rational in its ability to see connections between unlike things. Here is a characteristic example, from the opening of "Twin Beds in Rome" (1963), describing how a married couple, on the verge of separating, postpone the inevitable while

> their lovemaking, like a perversely healthy child whose growth defies every deficiency of nutrition, continued; when their tongues at last fell silent, their bodies collapsed together as two mute armies might gratefully mingle, released from the absurd hostilities decreed by two mad kings.

These comparisons—the "perversely healthy" child on a poor diet, the "grateful" mingling of two hostile armies—may strike some readers as metaphysical, in the disparaging sense conveyed by Dr. Johnson's description of 17th-century poets whose "heterogeneous ideas [were] yoked by violence together." To me, however, they are as arresting as John Donne's conceit of lovers' souls as the legs of a compass—terms not roughly yoked but adroitly reconciled. Part of the delight in reading Updike comes from following extended comparisons like these.

But who is this couple, Richard and Joan Maples by name? They are stand-ins, surely, for Updike and his first wife, a Radcliffe fine-arts major named Mary Pennington whom he married while a junior at Harvard in 1953 and with whom he had four children in five years. They—the Maples—are the subject of the seventeen stories and fragments previously gathered in a mass-market paperback (*Too Far to Go*, 1979), all but four of which are included here. Whereas the "Olinger Stories," which take up the first 125 pages of the new collection, evoke the anxiety, the comedy, the family romance, and above all the promise of the author's adolescence—for a sample, try "The Happiest I've Been" (1958)—the Maples stories evoke the conundrums of maturity.

Updike has introduced the set dispassionately:

> Though the Maples stories trace the decline and fall of a marriage, they also illumine a history in many ways happy, of growing children and a million mundane moments shared. That a marriage ends is less than ideal; but all things end under heaven, and if temporality is held to be invalidating, then nothing real succeeds. The moral of these stories is that all blessings are mixed.

Well, all right. But the stories also remind us that, in the 60's and 70's, traditional ideals suffered a massive countercultural assault. Not the least of those ideals was that married people ought to cleave to one another until death, that sable sergeant of what Updike calls "temporality," should sunder them. These days, as I can testify from classroom experience, the most anthologized of the Maples stories, "Separating" (1974), is harrowing for students because it reminds probably a good half of them of the trauma inflicted on them by their parents, and of the psychobabble those parents have used to justify their split. "For some years now," Richard tells his elder son in the jargon of the day, he and Joan "haven't been doing enough for each other, making each other as happy as we should be."

In "Here Come the Maples" (1976, not included here), the couple finally go through divorce proceedings. The chitchatting judge and lawyers are preoccupied with "speculations about the future of no-fault, reminiscences of the old days of Alabama quickies," while Joan and Richard stand ignored, "uncertain of how to turn, until Richard at last remembered what to do; he kissed her." How sweet, and how pathetic. I am reminded of "Packed Dirt, Churchgoing, a Dying Cat, a Traded Car" (1961), in which the narrator bids an awkward, possibly final goodbye to his dying father. It is an affecting moment, and yet perilously reminiscent of the way the father himself traded in his used cars: "the old was gone, gone, utterly dissolved back into the mineral world from which it was conjured, dismissed without a blessing, a kiss, a testament, or any ceremony of farewell. We in America need ceremonies."

How ABOUT religious ceremonies? The fathers in the Olinger stories, presumably based on Updike's own, are consistently churchgoing men. But when the father in "Packed Dirt" loses his faith near the end of his life, it does not seem to matter. ("He never was much one for faith," the mother says. "He was strictly a works man.") The son is much more fretful about such matters, largely because he knows that he too is going to die and would like some "separable" part of himself, his soul, to live forever. Only, he cannot expel the "rubber legs" terror that death means extinction, or the indignant conviction that "the God who permitted me this fear was unworthy of existence."

This sort of existential dread and

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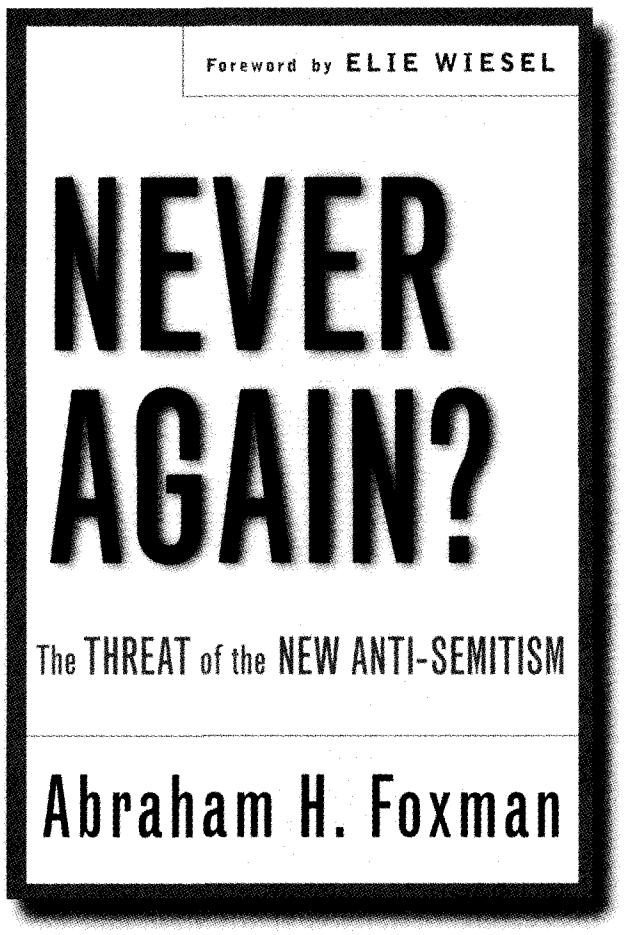

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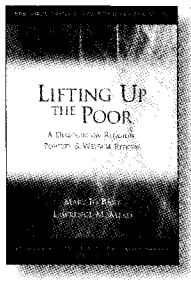

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rebellion, the familiars of youth, becomes muted as Updike's characters move into adulthood, and their mental energies become engaged by earning a dollar, changing a diaper, or chasing a lover. But the dread and rebellion never lurk far below the surface. The sermonic meditations of the divinity student in "Lifeguard" (1960) display a never-ending quest in Updike not so much for certitude—that was past hoping for since he had read H. G. Wells as a teenager—as for metaphors that might bring "our most obvious possession," our flesh, together with the God Who presumably created it.

In these early stories, however, most of the characters have little to show in either faith *or* works. National movements, like the one for civil rights during the 60's, are a backdrop to their lives, but—as in "Marching through Boston" (1965)—Updike's people make no more than fleeting commitments to the theater of protest and none at all to the educational efforts that might enable the economically backward to help themselves. Like Rabbit Angstrom, Updike's other alter ego down in southeastern Pennsylvania, Joan, Richard, and the rest are preoccupied with their private domestic lives—their looks, their erotic restlessness, their children, their mortality, their infidelities, the unsustainability of their joys.

How different are such lives from those of other generations? In one way, not at all; people, as Freud said, are *normally* unhappy, and Updike directly adds: "Discontent, conflict, waste, sorrow, fear—these are the worthy, inevitable subjects." But in another way Updike's characters are indeed different, laboring under conditions peculiarly their own.

He defines those conditions fairly:

> Born in the early Depression . . . [his generation] acquired in hard times a habit of work and came to adulthood in times when work paid off; we experienced when young the patriotic cohesion of World War II without having to fight the war. We were repressed enough to be pleased by the relaxation of the old sexual morality, without suffering much of the surfeit, anomie, and venereal disease of younger generations. We were simple and hopeful enough to launch into idealistic careers and early marriages, and pragmatic enough to adjust, with an American shrug, to the ebb of old certainties.

Updike the short-story writer, like Hawthorne and James, has made his mythic mark on American literature by portraying this "considerable fraction of [the] white majority" whose adult lives began around the time of the Korean war and hit their stride during the Vietnam war. That fraction has been central to the past half-century of our history, which is precisely why apologists for one or another American minority (or, in the case of women, majority) have often dubbed Updike irrelevant, limited, dull, or offensive. But even lucky majorities deserve their chroniclers in art, and not least when together they have lived in the interstices between historical watersheds—"too young to be warriors" against the Axis powers, "too old to be rebels" against the liberal democratic culture of their own victorious country.

What can honestly be said of Updike's generation is that they did not waste their opportunities, and if they often made a hash of their marriages, they still worked hard, and were rewarded. None has worked harder than Updike himself, and few have been as justly or as richly rewarded. I would say I am eager to have "the later stories" collected as handsomely as these early ones have been, except that his publisher no doubt wants to wait until he is finished. Which, we should all hope, will not be for some years yet.

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Sneak and Peek

The Naked Crowd:
Reclaiming Security and
Freedom in an Anxious Age
by Jeffrey Rosen
Random House. 272 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Jonathan Kay

Shortly after 9/11, Orlando International Airport in Florida tested a new security device that produced detailed, three-dimensional images of travelers and their possessions. Like the supposedly X-ray eyeglasses that used to be advertised in the back of comic books, the machine saw right through clothing. It turned the parade of passengers into a continuous, high-tech striptease.

The nudity, it turned out, was unnecessary. With a few programming tweaks, researchers were able to produce a prototype that, unlike the "naked machine," projected the images of hidden objects onto sexless cartoon figures. This "blob machine," writes Jeffrey Rosen, the legal-affairs editor of the *New Republic*, offered the best of both worlds: the same level of security with none of the attendant invasiveness and humiliation.

Yet—or so Rosen found in his own informal survey—many people, when offered a choice, actually preferred the "naked machine." Some confessed to mere exhibitionism. Others, he reports, "say they are so afraid of terrorism on airplanes that they would do anything possible to make themselves feel better, even if they understand, on some level, that their reaction is based on emotions rather than evidence." Since 9/11, he laments, we are increasingly giving up our privacy not to *be* safer but to *feel* safer.

Rosen begins in Britain, where privacy is already, by his account, in a state of advanced decay. Since bombers of the Irish Republican Army struck London's financial district in the early 90's, surveillance cameras have sprouted like toadstools on walls and ceilings all over the country. According to one estimate, the typical Briton is photographed more than 300 times a day. Spooked by terrorism and violent crime, however, most people welcome the scrutiny. "Instead of being perceived as an Orwellian intrusion, the cameras in Britain proved to be extremely popular," Rosen writes. "They were hailed as . . . a friendly eye in the sky, not Big Brother but a kindly and watchful uncle or aunt."

In terms of actual safety, have Britons benefited from this surveillance? Not much, it would seem. Two years ago, the British government examined the best available studies on the effects of closed-circuit television (CCTV). As the review concluded, the new systems had been "most effective in reducing vehicle crime in car parks" but "had little or no effect on crime in public transport and city-center settings." Indeed, when Rosen visited a CCTV control room in Hull, in northern England, he found that controllers were spending much of their time leering at attractive women—a predictable result, he notes, "when you put a group of bored, unsupervised men in front of live video screens and allow them to zoom in on whatever happens to catch their eye."

As for the U.S., a range of invasive new measures has been introduced in recent years, including the use of face-recognition scanners to vet crowds at the Superbowl and the Statue of Liberty, video surveillance in the public spaces of Washington, D.C., and provisions in the Patriot Act that permit the government to execute "sneak and peek" searches of a suspect's house without notifying him. And then there is the challenge to privacy that most concerns Rosen: "mass dataveillance" that, if

Jonathan Kay *is the editorials editor of the* National Post *in Toronto.*

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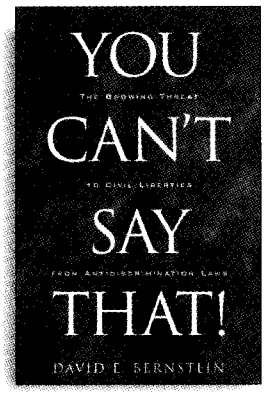

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by David Bernstein

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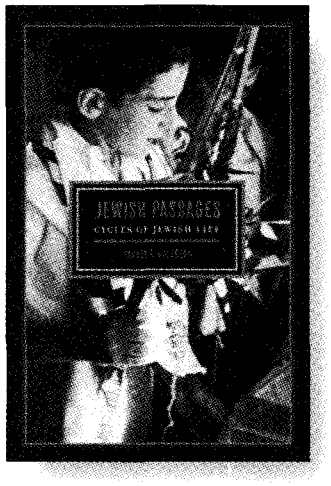

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implemented, will put the omnivorous data-gathering capabilities of Silicon Valley at the disposal of government snoops.

Under such a scheme, every piece of digital information we generate—from credit-card purchases to EZ-Pass automated toll data to phone records—would be entered in a giant, interconnected database. Applying a sophisticated algorithm, the government might eventually be able to produce a personalized "threat index" for each of us that would determine how aggressively we are screened upon boarding a plane or crossing a border.

To Rosen's mind, using personal data in this way smacks of the notorious "general warrants" that once allowed agents of King George III to ransack citizens' homes in search of incriminating information. If put into practice under the Bush administration's proposed Terrorism Information Awareness program, it would, he argues, not only break the spirit of the Fourth Amendment's guarantee against unreasonable searches but also vitiate the American ethic of unlimited opportunity by making everyone a prisoner of his past. Worst of all, it would not even protect us from terrorism, because no algorithm can be as effective as face-to-face screening.

THE ONGOING assault on privacy can be repulsed, Rosen concludes, only if Congress takes it upon itself to limit the more authoritarian tendencies of the executive branch. Lawmakers could require, for instance, the creation of digital firewalls and encryption schemes to keep private information insulated from the data-trawling of government agencies. To gain access to the information, officials would have to prove to a judge that their inquiry involved a bona-fide investigation into terrorism or violent crime.

Unfortunately, as Rosen sees it, Congress has no real incentive to protect privacy rights because most Americans seem prepared to surrender them unilaterally. Even before 9/11, a constellation of sociological factors—including the Internet, reality television, and the confessional ethic of modern social life—had caused us to ratchet down our expectations of privacy. In the aftermath of 9/11, panic accelerated the trend. Not only do we now readily accede to useless, invasive security rituals, we actually welcome them. People remove their shoes at airports in order "to give themselves the illusion of being protected from future shoe bombers."

As for "dataveillance," its roots lie not in the events of 9/11 but in the information-technology revolution of the mid-90's, which allowed retailers and credit companies to accumulate massive databases on our spending and web-surfing habits. Few of us were bothered when Amazon.com and other sites started leaving their own computer-file "cookies" on our hard drives or making surprisingly appropriate "recommendations" based on our previous purchases. Having embraced the liberating aspects of the Internet, we are psychologically unprepared, Rosen fears, for the possibility that the government might put it to sinister use.

AS AN overview of the newest threats to privacy in America, *The Naked Crowd* is a fine book. It would have been a finer one, though, had Rosen not adopted so fatalistic an attitude toward popular opinion. His subtitle—"Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age"—suggests a call to arms, but what he delivers reads more like an obituary. Americans, he suggests, can never be jolted from their slumber on this issue.

But Rosen's view already seems dated. Much of *The Naked Crowd* is based on two lengthy articles that he wrote for the *New York Times Magazine* in late 2001 and early 2002. At the time, memories of 9/11 were still raw, and it really did seem as if the need to combat terrorism

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might persuade Americans to compromise their privacy in radically unprecedented ways.

Today's political climate is much different. Civil libertarians of the Right and Left have mounted a strong campaign against the Patriot Act, and several of the Democratic presidential candidates have called on the Bush administration to scale back the new surveillance measures. As Rosen himself notes, Congress has already rebuffed the Pentagon by denying funding to the Terrorism Information Awareness program (whose name itself was changed from *Total* Information Awareness out of concern over its ominous overtones). The merits of these counter-efforts are themselves highly debatable, but they are hardly evidence of popular and political quiescence.

A more serious problem with *The Naked Crowd* is that Rosen never develops a realistic theory of how we might balance security with privacy. As he sees it, we can enjoy generous servings of both goods if the government simply adopts more rational policies. And he is right—so long as he is dealing with easy trade-offs, like the one between the "naked" X-ray machine and its more benign "blob" counterpart. His premise works far less well, however, with tougher cases.

Consider, for instance, racial profiling. If we wish to maintain security while also avoiding mass "dataveillance" and, as Rosen writes, the sight of "frail old ladies frisked like street hoodlums," screeners at airports and other critical facilities must be allowed to focus their scrutiny on those travelers most likely to perpetrate terrorism: that is, on young Muslim males of Middle Eastern appearance. At one point, Rosen seems to signal approval for this sort of profiling (at least as it is practiced by the Israeli national airline El Al). But elsewhere he reverses himself, condemning racial profiling because it stigmatizes people on the basis of immutable characteristics. By the end of *The Naked Crowd*, it is clear that few real-world screening methods could satisfy all of Rosen's various, contradictory conditions.

There is no getting around the fact that a government seeking to preempt terrorism will want to know where we travel, what we buy, whom we talk to, and even how we worship. No technology, screening policy, or regulatory scheme will allow the authorities to do all of this while permitting the same level of privacy and civil liberties we enjoyed before 9/11. Hard choices must be made, and *The Naked Crowd* does little, ultimately, to help us make them.

Altered State

Madame Secretary:
A Memoir
by Madeleine Albright
(with Bill Woodward)
Miramax/Hyperion. 562 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

WHAT IS the proper match between ends and means in U.S. foreign policy? This is one of those perennial questions that crop up, inter alia, in the reminiscences of U.S. Secretaries of State, there to receive a more or a less satisfactory answer. The post-World War II era has produced a number of such memoirs. Dean Acheson's magisterial *Present at the Creation* and Henry A. Kissinger's monumental three-volume trilogy could serve as bookends, bracketing such significant volumes as George P. Shultz's *Turmoil and Triumph* and Cyrus Vance's *Hard Choices*.

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD *is senior editor at* COMMENTARY. *His book,* The Return of Anti-Semitism, *has just been published by Encounter.*

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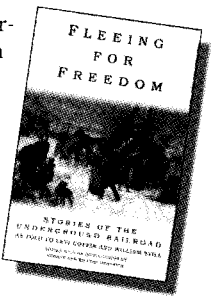

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Madame Secretary is a fascinating addition to the genre. Madeleine Albright served under President Bill Clinton for eight years, in his first term as U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations and in his second as the first woman ever to preside over Foggy Bottom. Her memoir, however, does not confine itself to this period, but is instead a highly personal story of an entire life. Written in a disarmingly self-deprecating voice, it reveals a great deal about many things, if also surprisingly little about the question with which we began.

The first 120 pages of *Madame Secretary* take us on a candid tour of Albright's childhood, adolescence, dating life, marriage, parenthood, and divorce. The daughter of Czechoslovak diplomats who fled the Nazis, young Madeleine Korbel was repeatedly uprooted as her parents made their journey from her birthplace in Prague to the United States. From her father, she acquired an abiding interest in world affairs along with a powerful antipathy to tyranny, Communism and Nazism alike. From some other deep but unidentified source, she acquired burning ambition.

Attending Wellesley, Madeleine met, fell for, and married Joseph Albright, "an American prince" who was the scion of a wealthy newspaper family. Alongside the task of raising their two daughters, she earned a Ph.D. in Communist affairs at Columbia under Zbigniew Brzezinski and mastered such upper-crust arts as croquet and quail-hunting. Moving to Washington with her husband, she became an avid social striver, entertaining fellow strivers who, she tells us here, could be overheard sniping "It's not wool" as they inspected her upstairs carpets.

Eventually, Albright's diligence at raising funds helped land her a desk in the office of Senator Edmund Muskie. Then, in the late 1970's, two years into Jimmy Carter's presidential term, Brzezinski, the new National Security Adviser, gave her a position on his staff. From that point on, her career went only upward.

By the time Bill Clinton came into office a decade later, Albright was already a notable in the Democratic party; installing her at the UN was a logical move for a President visibly determined, as Albright puts it, to "shatter the glass ceiling for women in foreign policy." (Jeane J. Kirkpatrick had actually shattered this particular ceiling long before.) From her perch on the East River, she came to serve as a kind of global spotter, skilled at locating foreign-policy brushfires though lacking the wherewithal to put them out.

With Warren Christopher's retirement as Secretary of State in 1996, Clinton chose Albright to re-

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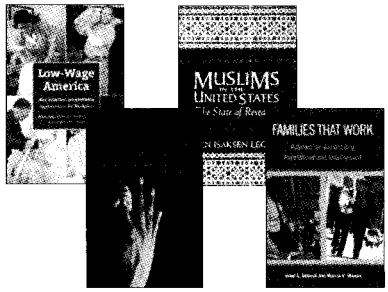

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place him. The frustrations of the UN post were behind her, but, as she relates, far greater frustrations lay ahead. Some of them were personal: her term began with the *Washington Post*'s discovery that, presumably unbeknownst to her, three of her four grandparents were Jewish and had been murdered by the Nazis. This disclosure was particularly disconcerting to one who, upon her marriage, had already converted from Catholicism to Episcopalianism.

Well before the furor over this revelation had died down, Albright was engaged in real firefighting, the chronicling of which takes up the rest of her book. Saddam Hussein was creeping out of his "box" and acquiring weapons of mass destruction. So too were North Korea and Iran. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda were blowing up U.S. embassies in Africa. Bosnia and then Kosovo were ablaze. Innumerable pressures were building on other fronts as well: NATO enlargement, the continuing aftermath of the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, violence between Palestinians and Israelis.

These were some of the issues clamoring for the attention of Secretary of State Albright for the remainder of her term. To make her life even more difficult, as all this was going on, attention was continually being deflected by the dalliances of Bill Clinton. The "new era" that the President inaugurated in our national life is acidly dubbed by Albright "All Monica, All the Time."

Albright's tale contains the ingredients of a powerful memoir. Here, after all, are the great issues not only of the Clinton decade but of our own, for in many respects the international diplomacy conducted during those years helped build the foundations of the exceptionally perilous world in which we now dwell. And Albright tells her story smoothly and for the most part frankly, complete with amusing anecdotes and often insightful aperçus.

Still, from an American Secretary of State one expects something more, some deeper reflections on the purposes of American power. There is a bit of this—but only a bit—in *Madame Secretary*. At various junctures, Albright, a relative hawk among the Clinton doves, expounds sensibly on the dangers posed by aggressive tyrannies and the dangers that would accompany American withdrawal from the world stage. But these are only occasional ventures, offset by innumerable diversions.

One such diversion concerns the Fourth World Conference on Women staged in Beijing in 1995. We learn from Albright about the wonderfully various set of NGO's

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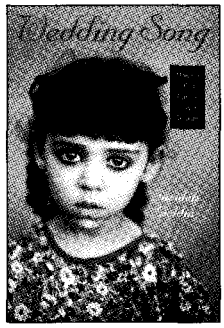

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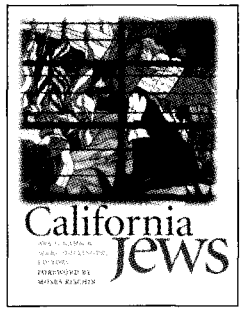

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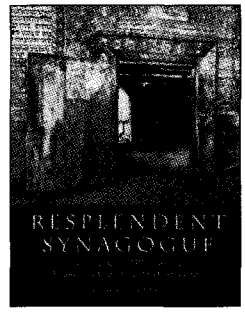

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(non-governmental organizations) that came to China to participate in this event, and about Hillary Clinton's inestimable contribution—her presence was "sheer oxygen," her speech a "stunner," the "high point" of a conference where "much hard work was done, including adoption of a Platform for Action." This UN feminist gabfest receives the same quotient of attention in Albright's pages as the threat posed by Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, and one gets the unfortunate sense from her recitation that it was a pinnacle of her diplomatic career.

Another diversion is the emphasis Albright places throughout on her own pioneering role as the first female Secretary of State. Fair enough, to a point. What is dismaying is the extent to which she still seems to see herself less as a Margaret Thatcher or a Golda Meir—that is, a woman who made it to the top by dint of experience and sheer mental candlepower—than as a somewhat undeserving beneficiary of affirmative action who must be perpetually on guard for slights.

"I had to deal with the problem of operating in a predominantly man's world," she complains at one juncture. "I found it hard to argue" with a bemedaled Colin Powell at Cabinet meetings, she grumbles at another. At still another, she is left wondering "whether gender played any role" in causing National Security Adviser Anthony Lake to drum his fingers impatiently on the table as she spoke.

That there may have been more valid reasons for her feelings of insecurity is suggested by other passages in this book. In one of them, she locates "the tiny nation of Moldova" in the Caucasus, when it lies almost 1,000 miles to the west—a disturbing slip from a specialist in Communist affairs. More seriously, even as the U.S. was facing unprecedented challenges around the globe, our first female Secretary of State seems to have been as intent on continuing a journey of personal discovery as on her official duties—and is now intent on sharing with us the details.

"I made my stage entrance in a long black dress," she writes about a skit she performed before the assembled notables of the ASEAN nations, "with crimson lipstick, a shawl, and a large flower in my hair. . . . I serenaded the crowd." Recounting life following her divorce, she worries aloud that "If I were 'involved' with someone, I had to deal with the specter of herpes and later AIDS." Dining with the UN Secretary General in an overheated room, she confides her fear that "I was having a hotflash." And then there is her never-ending struggle with her waistline, repeatedly brought here into national focus.

All of this gives inadvertent meaning to Albright's candid statement: "I *tried* to avoid doing anything inconsistent with the dignity of the office, but I was also *determined* to be myself." Emphasis very much added.

IT WOULD, of course, be both unfair and churlish to judge Albright's conduct of foreign policy by any of this. But one cannot help wondering about the connection between such displays of unseriousness and the visible difficulties of the Clinton team, from the distracted President on down, in matching the means of American power with its proper ends.

In the first term, there was Somalia, where, Albright writes, "we tried to do too much" and insufficiently armed U.S. soldiers were badly bloodied. Then there was Rwanda, where "we did too little" and, although U.S. troops were not bloodied, the local Tutsis were, in near-genocidal numbers. In Haiti, the Navy's *Harlan County* was ordered to make an about-face: "a low point in Clinton-administration foreign policy." In Bosnia, "[w]e employed a combination of half-measures and bluster that didn't work."

The second term offered more of the same. When Iraq defied UN inspectors, the Clinton administration initiated a pinprick attack on military facilities but left intact the murderous regime of Saddam Hussein. In Kosovo, a major war was fought without ground troops and with American aircraft confined to altitudes above 15,000 feet; enough force was applied to "win," but not enough to stop the Serbian army's depredations on the ground. In Afghanistan, al Qaeda's deadly attacks on American targets were answered with a salvo of cruise missiles that did nothing to curtail the menace posed by Osama bin Laden. Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear weapons were addressed, fruitlessly, by initiatives to foster the "good will" of "moderate" ayatollahs. North Korean attempts to acquire nuclear weapons were countered equally fruitlessly, this time with the help of the credulous Jimmy Carter.

In putting this record before us once again, Madeleine Albright has unwittingly written a withering exposé of herself and the administration she served. For anyone wishing to look back at the Clinton years to find seeds of our current troubles in the world, *Madame Secretary* is an excellent place to start. Admittedly, it is one of many.

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Do We Need More Troops or *Different* Troops?

Bruce Berkowitz is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

When U.S. and British forces got bogged down last March in their run to Baghdad, legislators, media pundits, and armchair strategists claimed that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had skimped on troops. The decisive victory that followed silenced them.

But now that our reconstruction efforts are encountering resistance by die-hard Baathists, foreign fundamentalists, and other assorted ne'er-do-wells, those same critics are now claiming that things would be a lot quieter in Iraq if we had listened to their advice and sent a bigger army to do the job.

Not so. The critics are compounding their earlier error with new ones. In the process, they are also overlooking an important new development—the role of reserves, a critical element in planning the future of the U.S. military.

The critics wanted more *combat forces*. The current situation, however, calls for *peacekeeping* and *nation-building forces*, which means military police who can establish order, public affairs specialists who can disseminate the message of the U.S. government, and civil affairs units who can deliver emergency aid to refugees. It also means intelligence units who can mix in with the local population and track down Saddam Hussein's remaining thugs.

The additional combat forces that the critics wanted back in March would have done little to help us in the current situation. Combat and peacekeeping require completely different capabilities.

Which brings us to the real problem today. The military has trained people in peacekeeping and nation building. But most of them are reservists, and those are the ones the Defense Department will need to rely more heavily on in the next few months.

The Pentagon claims that by 2004, 105,000 troops will be in Iraq, down from the current 130,000. Just over a third of those will be reservists—nearly three times as many as now.

Reservists disproportionately make up the forces used in peacekeeping and nation building. Ninety-seven percent of the army's civil affairs specialists are reservists; 82 percent of public affairs specialists are reservists. The figures are only slightly higher for military police, intelligence, and special forces.

Because it will be difficult to keep these people away from their civilian jobs, U.S. officials may come under pressure to cut the reconstruction process short, which could be disastrous.

Our current predicament is a legacy of the cold war, when it was assumed that reservists would be needed only for a short period and most likely in friendly locales, such as mopping-up operations in West Germany after a hypothetical Soviet invasion.

The situation has flip-flopped. The part of the war that combat forces perform is brief. But the operations in which reservists specialize—the war *after* the war—can take ten times as long.

Because we are likely to see this pattern repeated, we need to rethink our force structure. We may need to add more active-duty forces in noncombatant specialties or use more reservists in combat. Or we may need to spend more on defense.

Those are the costs of leading a war on terrorists and rogue states. The alternative is to rely on other countries or the UN—both of which have been unwilling to act decisively. Or we could hunker down and risk another attack like September 11. Today's debates over military reserve policy are really debates over America's role in the world.

—Bruce Berkowitz

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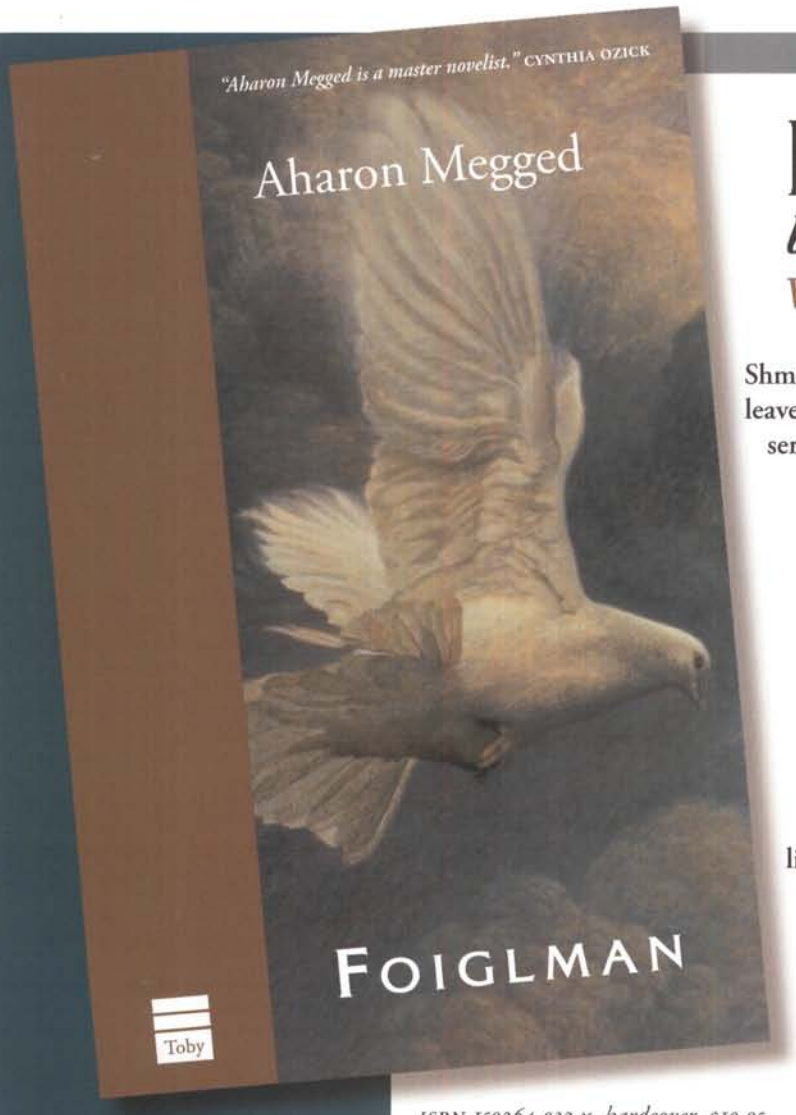

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